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**Neoliberalism and language shift:  
The Great Recession and the sociolinguistic vitality of Ireland's  
Gaeltacht, 2008-18**

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Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# Declaration

I confirm that this thesis has been composed solely by myself, and that the work contained within it has neither previously been published nor submitted for another degree.

Ben Ó Ceallaigh



## **Abstract**

The tendency of macro-level economic forces to drive language shift is frequently referred to in scholarship on language planning and policy (LPP). Despite this, there has, to date, been very little research that attempts to systematically explain how economic change contributes to language minoritisation. This thesis takes steps towards addressing this deficit by examining the effects of the “Great Recession” which began in 2008 on the vitality of the Irish language in those peripheral communities where it remains a vernacular, collectively known as the “Gaeltacht”. Although the first official language of the Republic of Ireland, Irish was in a severely threatened state in the Gaeltacht even before 2008, and this work demonstrates how the Great Recession served to significantly exacerbate what was an already challenging situation.

The decade following 2008 saw a rapid intensification of neoliberal policy measures both in Ireland and elsewhere. Given the international dominance of neoliberalism, this period thus offers a valuable opportunity to examine how neoliberal policies can negatively impact LPP initiatives. Drawing on concepts which are well established in the wider field of public policy studies, but not yet prominent in the more specialised area of LPP, the neoliberalisation of Irish-language policy between 2008-18 is charted, as are the disproportionately severe budgetary cutbacks received by institutions serving to promote the vitality of the Gaeltacht. It is argued that neoliberalism’s inherent antipathy towards social planning and redistributive economic policies meant that measures to support the Gaeltacht were inevitably hit particularly hard in an era of austerity.

The findings of ethnographic research conducted in some of the strongest remaining Gaeltacht communities in Galway and Donegal in the mid- and north-west of the country are also presented. These illustrate some of the micro-level consequences of the macro-level language policy reforms that took place in the wake of the crash, as well as many of the broader consequences of the recession for these communities, particularly with regard to their effects

on the sociolinguistic vitality of Irish. Labour market transformations, drastically increased out-migration and the dismantling of important community institutions are documented, along with other related developments.

This study thereby demonstrates some of the key ways in which the peaks and troughs experienced by Ireland's economy – which itself is one of the most neoliberal in the world – have contributed to the weakening of the Irish language in its core communities in recent years. In doing so it adds empirical weight to the assertions on the centrality of economic change to language loss that are so commonplace in LPP literature and highlights some of the fundamental tensions between neoliberalism and language revitalisation policy.

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## Abbreviations

CLS – *Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht* (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a)

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DAHRRGA – Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, as the department of state responsible for the Gaeltacht was named between 2016-17

DCRGA – Department of Community, Regional and Gaeltacht Affairs, the name for the department of state responsible for the Gaeltacht between 2002-10

EC – European Commission

ECB – European Central Bank

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

FnaG – Foras na Gaeilge, the all-Ireland language promotion and funding body

IDA – Industrial Development Authority, the agency responsible for attracting Foreign Direct Investment to Ireland

IMF – International Monetary Fund

LPA – Language Planning Area. Specified under the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*, the official Gaeltacht is divided into 26 such areas

LPP – Language Planning and Policy

NPM – New Public Management

RnaG – Raidió na Gaeltachta, the only Irish-language radio station broadcast nationally

RTÉ – Raidió Telefís Éireann, the state broadcaster

TG4 – The television station which broadcasts predominantly through Irish

ÚnaG – Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Gaeltacht development authority

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Language loss and macro-level social change

As many authors working in the area of language loss and endangerment have observed, the majority of the roughly 7,000 languages currently spoken are destined to be extinct by the end of the present century. Figures show that on average one language becomes extinct every ten days and that the “terminal speakers” of more than half the world’s languages are already alive (Harrison, 2007: 1, 5).

In attempting to explain this enormous, unprecedented rate of loss, Cooper (1990), Nettle and Romaine (2001) and Mufwene (2017), amongst many others, have observed that language shift is an epiphenomenon of macro-level social change. With the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century being marked by “fundamental social transformation perhaps unmatched since industrialization” (Putnam and Goss, 2004: 14), it is thus unsurprising that we face such an immense reduction in global linguistic diversity.

Endeavouring to get closer to the root of what drives such developments, statements linking language loss to economic forces are commonplace in Language Planning and Policy (LPP) literature. Grenoble and Whaley, for instance, state that economics “may be the single strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages” (1998: 52) and Romaine similarly notes that

the power of state language policies to produce intended outcomes is severely constrained by a variety of social, political and economic structures which sociolinguists have typically not addressed, even though their consequences are profound and of far more importance than language policies (Romaine, 2006: 456).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statements linking language minoritisation to economic forces can also be found in the following works: Baker, 2011: 62; Crystal, 2014: 175-6; Edwards, 1984: 304; Herbert, 2011; Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997: 280; McColl Millar, 2005: 26; Nelde et al., 1996: 7-11; Nettle and Romaine, 2000: 126-47; Ó Ciosáin, 2013: 362; Ó Murchú, 1996: 39; Ó Riagáin, 2001: 206; O’Rourke and Pujolar, 2013: 54; Phillipson, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 436-76; Tabouret-Keller, 1968: 113; UNESCO et al., 2003: 5; Williams, 1991: 4; etc.



Despite the frequency of such comments, as Grin (1999: 169), Austin and Sallabank (2011: 21) and Amano et al. (2014: 2) have observed, very few authors in the field of LPP have explained how precisely macro-level economic developments affect the fate of endangered languages. In light of the immediacy of the challenges facing those committed to the maintenance of linguistic diversity, it is, however, appropriate that a detailed understanding of this fundamental link be developed. This thesis takes some preliminary steps towards filling this gap in our knowledge.

While acknowledging that the concept of language shift has been contested by some scholars (e.g. Heller and Duchêne, 2007: 3) this thesis follows Potowski's definition of it being "the replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication and socialization within a community" (2013: 321). By better understanding the causes of language shift, it is hoped that the path to reversing this process will become more evident (cf. Fishman, 1991: 39).

Through examining the interaction between macro- and micro-level developments, this study offers a contribution to the study of social causality and the effects of economic structures on minoritised language communities and language revitalisation policy. In order to move beyond the high level of abstraction seen in much of the LPP literature which refers to economic factors, the consequences of the global economic crisis that began in 2008 for the Irish language, particularly in its heartland "Gaeltacht" communities, are explored. A case study is thereby provided in how macro-level developments in the global economy can precipitate significant social – and sociolinguistic – change in endangered language communities. While Grin (1999) has discussed the implications of both regulated and deregulated market contexts for minoritised languages, this thesis documents a period of transition from a relatively heavily regulated language policy regime to a much more deregulated one in the decade after the 2008 crash.

Although constitutionally the first official language of the Republic of Ireland, Irish is categorised as "definitely endangered" by UNESCO (2018). According

to the 2016 census, 73,803 people speak Irish daily outside the education system, out of a population of 4,757,956 (CSO, 2017a: 8, 66). As section 1.3 describes, after the foundation of the state in 1922, Irish enjoyed a level of institutional protection much greater than other similarly sized minoritised languages. This support was particularly important for Gaeltacht communities, which are overwhelmingly located in poorer, peripheral areas. As will be demonstrated, however, the 2008-18 period saw the strength of this support greatly weakened. Indeed, capital expenditure on Irish a decade after the Great Recession began was less than one seventh of what it had been in 2008, despite the end of “the time of cuts” being announced in 2018 (see 4.2.4; 4.3).

With the 2008 crisis ultimately being a crisis of neoliberalism (Blyth, 2013; Gamble, 2014) – the present phase of capitalism – the analysis of neoliberal theory and policies makes up a key part of this work. Following this introductory chapter which details research questions and offers a brief history of Irish-English language shift and revitalisation measures pre-2008, Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework and literature review. The emergence of neoliberalism as a global hegemony, the 2008 crash and the deeply neoliberal nature of the Irish economy are discussed therein, and relevant literature from the fields of sociolinguistics, sociology and anthropology is reviewed. The ethnographic methodology adopted in this thesis is described in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 detail this work’s findings: macro-level policy reforms are analysed in Chapter 4, and ethnographic data is presented in Chapter 5 to highlight the meso- and micro-level consequences of macro-level developments. The ethnographic fieldwork for this study took place in Galway and Donegal, the counties home to the strongest remaining Irish-speaking areas, although even there the language was under severe pressure before the 2008 crash (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a). The sixth and final chapter offers a summary of key findings and some concluding thoughts on language loss in a time of immense upheaval.

### **1.1.1 Research Questions**

In order to best address the issues outlined above, this thesis will answer the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between the economic ideology of neoliberalism and the Gaeltacht?
- How did the recession which began in 2008 affect Gaeltacht areas in Galway and Donegal in socioeconomic and sociolinguistic terms?
- In a country in which the state is ostensibly committed to language revitalisation, how are language policies shaped by dominant economic orthodoxies and why did these result in such severe cuts to Irish-language provision in the wake of the 2008 crash?

It is hoped that in answering these questions this thesis will provide a valuable contribution to the sociology of language, and particularly to the study of language loss and revitalisation, both in Ireland and elsewhere.

## **1.2 Irish-English language shift: a historic overview**

As is the case for many minoritised languages, the roots of the Irish language's marginalisation lie in colonial conquest. While the Anglo-Normans took control of much of the island following an invasion in 1169, they were assimilated into Irish-speaking society relatively quickly. With the exception of some Anglicised settlements, primarily near Dublin, Irish consequently remained dominant across the island throughout the middle ages (Doyle, 2015: 11-8).

It was only in the wake of the Tudor conquest which concluded with the final destruction of the Gaelic political order in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century that widespread shift towards English began, with urban centres and the upper classes adopting the language first (Ó Murchú, 1970: 25-6). In addition to military oppression and the exiling of the Gaelic aristocracy, the indigenous population were subjugated by the plantations which occurred throughout this period and the decades that followed, whereby the most fertile land was confiscated and given to English speakers who settled in Ireland in their thousands. Although a rebellion in 1641 saw some initial success, it was ultimately suppressed

during the brutal Cromwellian conquest, with the population being reduced by a staggering 50% between 1641-51 (Curtis, 1984: 28). The Penal Laws (enacted 1695-1704) institutionalised yet further marginalisation of the Irish-speaking, Catholic majority. Further to restricting the operations of the Catholic church, these laws prevented Catholics from voting, running for office, practicing law, buying land, bearing arms and owning either horses or property worth more the £5 (Doyle, 2015: 81-2).

This destruction of Irish political autonomy sparked a concomitant loss of cultural sovereignty, with an unstable Irish-English diglossic situation emerging in which English was definitively established as the language of power. The Catholic church's adoption of English as the language of instruction in the Maynooth seminary (founded 1795) was a further blow to Irish-language vitality, with the religion that was to become so central to Irish identity being largely associated with English from this point on (see Wolf, 2014, however, for examples of the clergy using Irish throughout the 1800s). The establishment of the English-medium-only national school system in 1831 was a further factor detrimental to Irish, with Patrick Pearse famously describing it as "the murder machine" due to its Anglicising effects (Pearse, 1976). These various forces combined thus began a steady westward retreat for the Irish language, the final stages of which are being played out in the present day.

In light of these assimilatory dynamics, by the time Ireland was formally incorporated into the British state under the Acts of Union in 1801, Irish was already spoken by only a minority of the population (Fitzgerald, 1984). As Wall describes, it had "ceased to be the language habitually spoken in the homes of all those who had already achieved success in the world, or who aspired to improve or even maintain their position politically, socially or economically" (1969: 82). Nonetheless, the Irish-speaking minority was a sizeable one. Ó hlfearnáin estimates that out of a population of 5.4 million at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some 2.4 million were Irish speakers (2010: 541, following Hindley, 1990: 15; see also Ó Riagáin, 1997: 4). While numerous, these speakers were amongst the poorest sections of Irish society and

overwhelmingly concentrated in peripheral areas, typically in the west of the country, where the introduction of the potato allowed the population to grow rapidly throughout the 1700s. Irish speakers therefore suffered disproportionately during the Great Famine of 1845-49, when the combined effects of starvation and emigration saw the population of the island fall by at least two and a half million (Ó Murchú, 1970: 28). The Famine initiated an enduring pattern of mass emigration, with the population continuing to decline until the 1960s, when it began to slowly increase. This widespread outmigration caused English to be seen as a key skill necessary for emigrating (Corrigan, 1992; McMahon, 2008: 15), thereby destroying what little prestige the language had maintained and prompting an extremely rapid process of language shift in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1851 census, conducted in the immediate wake of the Famine, was the first to include a question on language ability. It recorded some 1,524,286 Irish speakers (29%), including 319,602 monoglots (Fitzgerald, 1984: 140), although methodological issues mean this may have been an underestimate (Ó hÍfearnáin, 2010: 542). Perhaps unsurprisingly, areas with a high concentration of monoglots in 1851 closely correspond to districts where Irish has survived to this day (Fitzgerald, 2003: 204). By 1891, however, the census registered only 680,000 Irish speakers, and, of these, a mere 3.5% were under 10 years of age (Ó hÍfearnáin, 2010: 541; Hindley, 1990: 15). As Ó Cuív summarises, so rapid was language shift throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century that by 1891 99% of the population could speak English and 85% could not speak Irish (1969: 128). Of those who were Irish speakers at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, over 80% of them lived in counties which are home to Gaeltacht areas in the present day (Ó Neachtain, 2014: 373), with the exception of Meath, where a small “neo-Gaeltacht” was established in the 1930s.

In response to the widespread disruption of the era, political nationalism took on a renewed vigour throughout the country from 1798 on, with groups such as Young Ireland and the Irish Republican Brotherhood organising several failed rebellions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although these organisations and

other important movements such as the Land League and the campaign for Catholic Emancipation operated overwhelmingly through English, in the last quarter of the century cultural nationalism emerged as a significant ideological force in Irish society. Taking influence from a mixture of romanticism, Darwinism and *fin de siècle* thinking (Ó Conchubhair, 2009), those involved in this “Gaelic revival” saw Irish as the key marker which indexed Irish identity. While a number of language-focused scholarly and antiquarian organisations were established in the early 1800s, *The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language* (founded 1876) was the first organisation which specifically aimed for the restoration of Irish as the nation’s vernacular (Ó Murchú, 2001). This society was succeeded in 1893 by *Conradh na Gaeilge* (“The Gaelic League”), which quickly grew into a mass movement, ultimately serving a key role in the ideological development of many of those involved in the struggle for independence (Garvin, 1987: 80). Within twenty years membership had grown to 100,000 and some 950 branches had been founded (Garvin, 1987: 79; McMahon, 2008: 87-8).

As well as organising night classes, immersion courses for teachers and publishing propaganda and educational materials, the League achieved several important political goals, particularly regarding the use of Irish in the education system. As part of their policy of “killing home rule with kindness” (Jackson, 2010: 147), in 1900 the British authorities permitted the teaching of Irish as an optional subject in schools, and competency in the language became compulsory for admission to the National University of Ireland in 1913 (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 161). Despite those involved in the League being predominantly middle-class urbanites, the importance of maintaining Irish-speaking communities came to be widely accepted amongst revitalisation advocates (e.g. Bergin, 1911: 8). Indeed, it was during this period that the term “Gaeltacht” first came to prominence as a way of denoting such areas, with “Galltacht” occasionally being used to refer to the rest of the country (Ó Torna, 2005; see also Walsh, 2011a: 403 for a problematising of the concept of the Galltacht). Echoing romanticist understandings of the pre-industrial peasantry, Gaeltacht communities were seen as untarnished by colonial influence or the

homogenising effects of contemporary society, a resource which could be drawn upon to support revitalisation efforts throughout the country (Doyle, 2015: 193-200). This understanding would be of key importance to early language policy after the Free State was founded in 1922, and continues to hold some currency to this day.

### **1.3 Early state policy and the institutionalisation of the Gaeltacht**

Shortly after its establishment, the Irish Free State set about implementing an extensive programme of language revitalisation. This “megapolicy” (Ó Buachalla, 1994) rested on four main pillars, namely (i) using the education system to spread knowledge of Irish in areas where it had died out; (ii) encouraging the use of Irish in the civil service and institutions of public administration; (iii) elaboration and standardisation of the language, including the “domain recapture” of higher registers that had been lost during the process of language shift; and (iv) maintenance of communities where Irish remained a vernacular, which were seen as “the repository of the linguistic elixir of Irish nationhood” (Ó Tuathaigh 1990: 11; Ó Riagáin, 1997: 15-9).

Although evidence suggests that the political elite of the newly founded state never believed these measures would truly reinstate Irish as the nation’s vernacular, but at best hoped for a bilingual state (Ó Giollagáin, 2014a: 37; Ó Tuathaigh, 2011: 82), these early policies were adopted with a vigour that has not since been matched. Despite the economic situation of the country being dire during these early years, such was the influence of revivalist ideology on Free State leaders such as Éamon de Valera, Eoin MacNeill and Ernest Blythe that they were willing to commit resources to revitalisation measures in a way that has not occurred since the end of the nationalist and protectionist phases of Irish political development, circa 1960 (Watson, 2016).

In order to provide an empirical basis for the formulation of Gaeltacht policy, a Gaeltacht Commission was established in 1925 with the goals of deciding what percentage of speakers would warrant an area being officially classified as

Irish-speaking, as well as making recommendations regarding maintaining the use of Irish in such communities (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: 1; Walsh, 2002). The commission's report proposed that those areas in which Irish was spoken by over 80% of the population be recognised as *fíor-Ghaeltachtaí* ("true-Gaeltachts"), while those where between 25-79% were Irish speakers would be deemed *breac-Ghaeltachtaí* ("speckled-Gaeltachts"). These categories contained 168,279 and 307,907 people respectively (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 18), although the number of these who were competent Irish speakers was almost certainly overstated (Ó Cuív, 1951). While 18% of the population were returned as Irish speakers in the 1926 census, Ó Riagáin estimates that by this stage only 3% of the population lived in Irish-dominant communities (1997: 271). Further to the vast majority of Irish speakers living in areas where the language was already moribund and of very low prestige, the concentration of the language in areas of widespread underdevelopment meant that Gaeltacht life was "characterized by extensive out-migration, depopulation and deprivation" (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 17; see also 5.2.3). The challenging economic situation of the Gaeltacht continued to be a major impediment to language maintenance throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, as this thesis will describe, continues to be of great significance to the present day.

Amongst the proposals made by the 1926 commission were a multitude of recommendations for incentivising and spreading the use of Irish in Gaeltacht schools, including offering additional training and wages to teachers and third-level scholarships to Gaeltacht residents, with the hope that many would become teachers themselves. The recruitment of native Irish speakers to the civil service, army and police force, as well as giving greater remuneration to public servants stationed in the Gaeltacht was also recommended, with it being stated that no non-Irish speaker should be employed by the state in the Gaeltacht, a proposal yet to be implemented (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: 59-63; 4.2.9).

The commission also made proposals regarding the economic development of the Gaeltacht in the hope of reducing population loss via emigration. These



included land redistribution and agricultural aids such as state-funded vets and plant nurseries; grants for the improvement of housing; the resettlement of communities as “large homogenous groups” to more productive land elsewhere in the country; development of the fishing industry via the building of ports and processing factories; and supporting the homespun cloth industry (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: 63-4).

As Ó Tuathaigh notes, however, a fundamental problem with implementing such policies was that the state “did not have a coherent policy of economic investment and social planning within the context of overall community development” at this time (1990: 5). Furthermore, prefiguring the post-2008 developments that this thesis will focus on, financial constraints were a major stumbling block which impeded the acceptance of many of these proposals (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2008: 77), with Lee arguing that the commission was “duly sabotaged” as a result (1989: 135). Key proposals were rejected by the Department of Finance – despite its then head, Ernest Blythe, being a committed Gaelic League member – seemingly for fear that non-Gaeltacht areas would demand similar provision, something state finances could not support (Lee, 1989: 135). Overall, only 14 of 82 recommendations contained in the white paper published in response to the commission were ever implemented (Uí Chollatáin, 2016: 192). Watson thus claims that early attempts to maintain the Gaeltacht ultimately amounted to little more than “preservation through neglect and seclusion” (2016: 66), with Ó Tuathaigh describing those schemes that were implemented as being merely “plugs in a shattering dyke” (1990: 5).

Despite this, some innovative measures were instigated in the early years of the state, chief amongst them perhaps being *Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge* (“Irish-speaking scheme”; established 1934). Under this scheme, described by Ó Broithe as one of the most important LPP initiatives the state ever implemented (2012: 238), an annual grant was given to Gaeltacht parents whose children passed an Irish-competency exam designed to test whether Irish was spoken to them at home. Further to the monetary incentive and the valorisation of what

had been for several hundred years a deeply stigmatised language, this scheme provided an important insight into rates of intergenerational transmission in the Gaeltacht (Ó Broithe, 2012: 239-40). As Chapter 4 describes, however, this initiative was one of many discontinued under post-2008 austerity measures.

Significant progress was also made regarding the position of the language in the education system. Irish-medium teacher training colleges were established, Irish was made a compulsory subject in all schools and the percentage of schools teaching entirely or partially through Irish reached 55% by 1940 (Fishman, 1991: 138), with all Gaeltacht schools being entirely Irish-medium. Irish competency was also made compulsory for new recruits to the civil service.

Nonetheless, in the decades following the foundation of the state the Gaeltacht continued to atrophy. With the hoped-for national revitalisation failing to materialise and language shift continuing apace, in 1956 a specific state department for the Gaeltacht was established and the borders of the Gaeltacht were redrawn, with the *fíor-/breac-Ghaeltacht* distinction being abolished and most Breac-Ghaeltacht areas losing their Gaeltacht status entirely (Walsh, 2012a: 181-2). The new borders more accurately reflected the true standing of the language than the heavily aspirational designations proposed in 1926, which included areas where Irish was spoken “regardless of the extent to which English may have an ascendancy in daily use” (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: 6-7). Under the new delineations, however, the “political Gaeltacht” continued to be larger than the “real Gaeltacht” (Lee, 1989: 673). The first Gaeltacht minister, Patrick Lindsay, saw to it that the borders were defined in such a way as to maximise the flow of grant-aid to residents in deeply impoverished – but only weakly Irish-speaking – areas of his constituency in north-west Mayo (Ó Giollagáin, 2016: 99-100). With the official Gaeltacht nonetheless shrinking considerably as a result of this review, the non-contiguous nature of the remaining Irish-speaking territories became even more apparent, with Gaeltacht areas not corresponding to administrative

districts such as county councils. This continues to provide a major managerial challenge – particularly in light of Ireland’s lack of empowered local government institutions – with such disparate enclaves being deeply “unamenable to bureaucratic convenience or administrative economies” (Ó Tuathaigh, 1990: 6; Breathnach, 2000; Walsh, 2012a: 183-90).

In response to the mass emigration from the Gaeltacht that occurred throughout the 1950s (see 5.5.1), a more concerted approach to economic development was adopted towards the end of the decade. A Gaeltacht-specific development agency, Gaeltarra Éireann, was established in 1958 at a time when state economic policy was beginning to undergo a major re-orientation, as the following section describes. While initially focused on the development of indigenous industry in much the same way the 1926 commission had proposed, Gaeltarra played a key role in modernising the economy of the Gaeltacht by attracting much-needed inward investment and subsidising industry which would otherwise not have located in such areas (Fennell, 1981a: 34). As noted below, however, this strategy itself presented distinct challenges for language maintenance.

## **1.4 State withdrawal from the revitalisation project**

While including some commendable efforts at reinvigorating the flagging revitalisation process, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw state commitment to the revitalisation project wane considerably. At the request of then-Taoiseach Éamon de Valera, in 1958 *An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge* was established to assess policies to date and offer advice regarding future measures. This commission’s report was explicit in its opinion that funding for revitalisation efforts needed to be increased significantly:

*[i]s lánmhithid a aithint go soiléir go mbainfidh caiteachas mór le hathbheochan na Gaeilge, caiteachas nach féidir dul uaidh má tá uainn go mairfidh an teanga. Ní leor go mbeadh rún daingean againn an Ghaeilge a shábháil muna mbíonn rún eile, lán chomh daingean leis,*

*againn an cúnamh airgid atá riachtanach chuige a chur ar fáil* (An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge, 1963: 85).<sup>2</sup>

The government white paper published in response to the report made no such promise of appropriate funding, however, instead couching many of its commitments in terms like “as far as practicable” (Government of Ireland, 1965; Ó Croidheáin, 2006: 220; see also 4.2.9). Furthermore, this paper provided the first official acknowledgment that re-Gaelicisation was not a viable policy (Government of Ireland, 1965: 10-12). In what can be seen as one of the first steps in the state’s abandoning its revitalisation goals, it instead acknowledged the importance of English and proposed the creation of a bilingual society as an official goal, conceding that “[i]s mór is fiú an Béarla mar theanga idirnáisiúnta i gcúrsaí cumarsáide, trádála agus cuartaíochta agus mar mheán rannpháirtíochta i ngnóthaí ar fud an domhain” (Government of Ireland, 1965: 11). With the stage thus set for the beginning of state withdrawal from the language project, by 1968 the original commission claimed that “few of the recommendations of the white paper policy had been put into effect” (in Ó Huallacháin, 1994: 152).

As well as the cynicism brought about by several decades of failure to revive the language, wider economic and political developments in Irish society at this time contributed to the lacklustre nature of this official response. As the state’s first generation of leaders began to retire, by the mid-1960s and early 1970s a new cohort was coming to power. Many of this second generation of politicians were closely linked to business (Coakley, 2012: 163) and intent on reforming what were seen as failed policies in both the economic and cultural spheres. The adoption in 1958 of the *Economic Development* plan written by Department of Finance official T. K. Whitaker “in close consultation with World Bank advisors” (Coakley, 2012: 158) led to the end of protectionist policies under the modernising government of Seán Lemass (1959-66; Bew and Paterson, 1982: 118). In accordance with this shift, political support for

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<sup>2</sup> English translations of the Irish-language extracts included in this text are given in the appendix.

ambitious – and often unpopular (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 21) – language revitalisation measures began to diminish:

[p]rotectionism, of all varieties, gave way to “openness”, to cultural no less than economic forces: the application was being prepared for membership of the European “Common Market”, the new setting in which Irish identity would be refurbished and reconfigured (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008: 33).

The implementation of this new development paradigm by the state opened the door for the development of neoliberalism as the key economic policy in Ireland over the following decades (Kirby, 2010: 14-30). In accordance with the arguments that will be made throughout this thesis regarding the fundamental tension between such policies and language revitalisation, the withdrawal of state support for Irish at this juncture must be placed in the context of this move towards economic liberalisation, which made it all but inevitable that the state would begin to withdraw from this area (see sections 2.2; 4.2.10; 5.1).

The period of “stagnation and retreat” (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 19) in Irish-language policy that followed this economic reorientation did indeed see significant decline in institutional support for the language from the early 1970s. This included the abolition of the language requirement for entrance to the civil service, the closing of Irish-medium teacher training institutions, the removal of the requirement to pass Irish to earn the Leaving Certificate, as well as a sharp decrease in numbers of Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 19-25).

Although official language policy weakened considerably post-1965, it must be acknowledged that the reformed state economic programme did bestow considerable benefit on the Gaeltacht, compared with previous protectionist policies. The successful attraction of industry to the Gaeltacht for the first time saw employment opportunities increase and, following massive emigration in the 1950s, “the historic pattern of demographic decline was arrested and reversed between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s” (Ó Tuathaigh, 1992: 10). Despite this, however,

all three main Gaeltacht areas continued to lose a significant number of young adults through emigration; but in-migration (with a high quota of married couples with children) compensated for the emigration losses (Ó Tuathaigh, 1992: 10; 5.5).

This period also saw those involved in the revitalisation effort begin to engage with language planning on a more scientific basis, taking lessons from the burgeoning field of sociolinguistics. The advisory group *Comhairle na Gaeilge*, established in 1969 as a result of the 1965 white paper (Government of Ireland, 1965), published important works that situated Irish-language planning in the context of contemporary developments in the linguistic and social sciences (e.g. Ó Murchú, 1970; see also CILAR, 1975). While its founding was an extremely fraught process (Ó Huallacháin, 1994: 170-87), the opening of *Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann* in 1974 as a full-time research and policy unit was also an important development. The following year a nationwide language promotion body *Bord na Gaeilge* was established (since succeeded by *Foras na Gaeilge*, see 4.2.6).

Furthermore, a small Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement based in Galway in the late 1960s and early 1970s successfully campaigned for the establishment of a Gaeltacht radio station (see 4.2.8.1) and a democratic authority for the Gaeltacht. *Údarás na Gaeltachta* (hereafter *ÚnaG*), was founded in 1979, replacing *Gaeltarra Éireann* as the Gaeltacht development authority. Unlike *Gaeltarra*, the board of *ÚnaG* was elected by Gaeltacht residents every five years. The establishment of such a democratic body was a major achievement for grassroots campaigning at a time when the state was otherwise withdrawing support for language revitalisation. While originally intended to have a significantly wider remit than its predecessor, such powers failed to be granted to – or demanded by – *ÚnaG*, meaning that it ultimately failed to live up to the aspirations of those who campaigned for it (Walsh, 2011a: 299). As 4.2.4 describes, the *ÚnaG* election was abolished in 2012 as a cost-saving measure, and the institution's budget cut by almost 75% between 2008-15.

While the “ethnic revival” of the 1960s and 70s saw significant gains by linguistic minorities in many parts of the world (Fishman et al., 1984), in Ireland

developments were thus more modest, with progressive energies focusing, particularly throughout the 1970s, on the war in the north-east of the island (Fennell, 1981a: 37). Consequently, there was relatively little grassroots resistance to the state's "de-institutionalization of the Irish language" (Mac Giolla Chríost, 2005: 122). Such was the extent of state prevarication on language policy during this time that Fishman, writing to Irish-language scholar and activist Colmán Ó Huallacháin in 1971, claimed that

[w]hat does disturb me . . . is the now quite apparent delaying tactics whereby recommendations are neither rejected nor implemented but simply surrounded by administrative silence and inaction. After four years of waiting I have come to the conclusion that I have been used not as a consultant but as an unwitting participant in a master plan to do nothing, i.e. nothing real or decisive . . . Policy has continued to be mere verbiage, being neither decisive no[r] informed. I have lately concluded that this then is *exactly* what the Irish government wants and my only regret it that it hasn't had the courage to say so to me, to you and to the public (in Ó Huallacháin, 1991: 133, original emphasis).

One striking illustration of this behaviour which is of particular relevance to this thesis (particularly Chapter 4) is to be seen in a formerly confidential document written at the height of the recession of the 1980s. The document in question, which was released under the 30-year rule in December 2015, is an internal ministerial memorandum which details the Department of Education's decision to publish, but, due to budgetary constraints, not implement a far-reaching policy for reforming Gaeltacht education. Indeed, the then minister for finance noted the need to ensure "that expectations are not raised and interest groups given no encouragement to press for implementation" (in Delap, 2015). While it is notoriously difficult to measure what public policy scholars term the "second face of power" – the decision by elites *not* to act (Cairney, 2012: 52; 4.2.4; 4.2.10) – such documents provide perhaps the most tangible proof of this concept that social scientists could hope for and clearly demonstrate the challenges Fishman and others faced in dealing with the Irish state.

This lack of concerted state support unsurprisingly saw Irish-speaking areas continue to shrink, with language shift continuing unabated throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those efforts that were made to resist this were

in no way sufficient to counteract the major socioeconomic changes which began to take place in Ireland from the mid-1960s onwards and which spurred an increased turn towards English in the Gaeltacht. As Ó Riagáin describes, the transformation of the traditional agrarian economy and the integration of the Gaeltacht into the wider national and international economy at this time saw language shift begin even in areas that had previously been relatively stable linguistically. Increased rates of car ownership allowed those from remote areas to travel much more readily for employment located outside their communities. Shopping, recreation and pursuing education outside the Gaeltacht also became much more commonplace, thereby “intensif[ying] the frequency of interactions between Irish-speakers and English-speakers” (Ó Riagáin, 2008: 57). Ó Riagáin’s assessment thus sees the 1960s and 70s as the period when language shift began in heartland Gaeltacht areas, rather than being confined to the contraction of much more weakly Irish-speaking areas on the periphery of the Gaeltacht, as had previously been the case (2008: 57).

In accordance with this analysis, Ó Curnáin has described the linguistic implications of the Conamara Gaeltacht becoming increasingly integrated into wider patterns of socioeconomic organisation. Offering a typology which sees those born before the 1960s as being speakers of “traditional Irish”, Ó Curnáin details the linguistic changes and reduced acquisition of younger speakers, defining those born between 1960-90 as speakers of “non-traditional Irish” whose speech is marked by high levels of English-influenced idiom and morphological/phonological innovation (Ó Curnáin, 2012a: 287). As discussed in 5.10, the most recent generations of Gaeltacht natives (born since 1990) are seen by Ó Curnáin to be speaking “reduced Irish”, a variety marked by a high degree of influence from English and significant use of functional code switching (cf. Dorian, 1977).

In light of this analysis, it is unsurprising that Fennell, writing in 1981 about recent developments where he lived in Maínis, Co. Galway – one of the strongest Irish-speaking communities – claimed that the shift to English had begun even there (Fennell, 1981b). Seeing return migration as a key factor



triggering this Anglicisation (see 5.5), Fennell claimed that “[i]n the course of the 70s, in most parts of the (real) Gaeltacht, most parents of young children began to rear them in English” (1981b: 8). Assessing the strength of the language in the mid-70s, he concluded that only about 1/3 of the population of the official Gaeltacht lived in communities where Irish was dominant, amounting to some 25,900 people spread across three main areas in Donegal, Galway and Kerry (1981b: 11).

These observations were later echoed by Hindley’s oft-cited findings which presented a bleak picture of the level of Irish use in the Gaeltacht, based on data concerning the use of Irish in families. While not published until some years later, Hindley’s research throughout the 1970s and 1980s led him to very similar conclusions, namely that language shift was occurring rapidly in the strongest remaining Gaeltacht districts, with it thus being only a matter of time until even the most remote areas shifted to English, just as the rest of the country had done over the preceding centuries (Hindley 1989, 1990). Reflecting on this continuing contraction of the Gaeltacht and the generally weakened nature of state support for the language compared to the early decades of Free State efforts, in 1989 Lee thus concluded that “[p]olicy for about two decades has clearly been to let the language die by stealth” (1989: 673).

Adopting the terminology of public policy studies, language policy since the foundation of the state can therefore be broadly characterised as consisting of a period of “incrementalist” progression (Cairney, 2012: 94-108) from 1922 until the mid-1960s. A large-scale re-evaluation of state priorities at this time, however, saw this equilibrium punctuated, with the beginning of a further incrementalist process of withdrawal which was to continue steadily – albeit with some important exceptions – over the following decades. The economic transformations of the time also saw the Gaeltacht integrated into the modern economy to a degree that had not previously occurred, with the erosion of the strongest remaining Gaeltacht areas consequently beginning in earnest from the 1960s onwards.

## 1.5 Language Policy during the Celtic Tiger

Despite the overall trend following the pattern of withdrawal that had been underway since the 1960s, the Celtic Tiger period of the 1990s and early 2000s in which the Irish economy underwent a process of rapid growth (see 2.4) nonetheless saw several noteworthy and positive developments take place in Irish-language policy. The prosperity accompanying the boom allowed for some significant investments to be made in the sector, although relatively little was done to engage with the challenge of ongoing language shift in the Gaeltacht. Indeed, similar to the socioeconomic transformations of the 1960s and 70s, this era of socioeconomic transformation intensified language shift in core Gaeltacht areas, further exacerbating an already precarious linguistic situation (cf. Ó Curnáin 2007: 59; 2012a).

Following the steady marginalisation of Irish in state domains over the preceding decades, at the beginning of the Celtic Tiger in 1993 the Department of the Gaeltacht had its remit significantly expanded, being renamed the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. While some were hopeful this would give the relevant minister more bargaining power at the cabinet table, it ultimately amounted to a substantial reduction of the importance of the Gaeltacht at government level, as a civil servant who has been in the department since the 1980s explained to me during an interview:

*P: [S]ílimse gur chéim mhór chun cúil a bhí ann in '93 nuair a rinneadh ar shiúil le Roinn na Gaeltachta. Agus an rud is aistí fá dtaobh de ní raibh mórán raic fá dtaobh de ó lucht na Gaeilg ag an am. Agus an rud a chiallaigh sé sin, suas go 1993 bhí roinn stáit amháin sa tír ag obair is ag feidhmiú go hiomlán trí Ghaeilg. An t-aon cheann amháin. Rinneadh ar shiúil leis sin nuair a tugadh ealaíon agus oidhreacht agus na rudaí sin isteach. Agus anois níl ionainne ach sciar bheag den roinn, atá ag feidhmiú trí Ghaeilg. I dunno cé mhéad duine atá ag obair leis an roinn anois, 300 b'fhéidir. Bheadh Gaeilg ag b'fhéidir 50 acu.*

The department's portfolio was expanded yet further in 1997 when it became the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, a pattern of expansion which, as described in 4.2.5, continued during the post-Celtic Tiger period.

A significant boon for the language, however, came in 1996 with the establishment of the Irish-language television station, TG4 (then *TnaG/Telefís na Gaeilge*). While this was a very positive development, it is notable that – as with the Gaeltacht radio station – it was brought about due to the sustained efforts of grassroots campaigners, rather than being an example of the ambitious top-down LPP measures that characterised earlier state policy (Watson, 2003: 62-115). Nonetheless, this was a key development in making language-based employment available not only where the TG4 headquarters is based in Conamara in west Galway, but throughout the Gaeltacht, with independent production companies in many Gaeltacht areas working as contractors for the station (TG4, 2016a: 22). It has also had a significant positive impact on the language’s prestige nationally (Mac Donnacha, 2008: 104). A detailed discussion of the effects of austerity measures on the station is provided in 4.2.8.2.

In 2000, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands undertook a review of the status of the Gaeltacht, which, it has been argued by both Ó Giollagáin (2014b) and Mac Donnacha (2014), was the belated official response to Hindley’s controversial work (1990). Taking precedent from the initial Gaeltacht Commission in 1926, this “Second Gaeltacht Commission” reported in 2002 and made clear that the policy status quo was untenable if the state intended to maintain the Gaeltacht as a distinct linguistic community. One of its main recommendations which was enacted was the commissioning of a comprehensive study of the current status of Irish in the Gaeltacht (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 2002: 17). This study, published in 2007 (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a), demonstrated that “not only was Hindley’s analysis accurate, but that he had been, if anything, slightly optimistic”, as one of the report’s main authors has since put it (Mac Donnacha, 2014).

A further key recommendation of the second Gaeltacht commission was that a language act be implemented which would give legislative force to the constitutional status of Irish (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 2002: 17). While the government had committed to such an act in 1998, this promise was followed

by a period of typical equivocation and delay, until the process was spurred on by a case taken against the state by a private citizen in 2001 (Bohane, 2005: 2). Two years later the *Official Languages Act 2003* finally came into being (Government of Ireland, 2003).

While some commentators saw this Act as being too little, too late – “a last hurrah” in Ó Riagáin’s words (2008: 65; see also Ó Béarra, 2008: 64) – it was nonetheless generally welcomed by the Irish-speaking community as a positive development. It legislated for a variety of language rights and provisions, including regarding the use of Irish in the courts, in interactions with the state, in parliament, on road signs, etc. Notably, however, the Act prefixes many of these measures with the remarkable disclaimer “with the consent of the minister for finance” (Government of Ireland, 2003: 12, 18, 20). Perhaps the most important provision made in the Act was to establish an independent language commissioner, *An Coimisinéir Teanga*, whose office monitors the implementation of the Act, particularly the requirement for public bodies to prepare language schemes detailing services that they will provide through Irish if requested to do so by the department responsible for the Gaeltacht. The relevant minister is required to give approval to such schemes in order for them to come into effect. The Act also requires that such schemes make provision for ensuring that Irish becomes the working language of state offices in the Gaeltacht and that all services are available in Irish therein, as originally proposed by the 1926 Gaeltacht Commission. As section 4.2.9 describes, however, the work of the Coimisinéir has been most challenging, with the Act being widely ignored, a tendency seemingly intensified as a result of extensive public sector rationalisation in the wake of the recession.

A further change of note during the Celtic Tiger period was the acceptance in 2005 of Irish as an official working language of the EU, with full translation provision to begin in 2007. This too was amongst the recommendations of the second Coimisiún na Gaeltachta (2002: 17) and had been the focus of a sustained campaign by activists over several years which culminated in a 5,000-strong march in Dublin in 2004. Despite this development being

welcomed by language organisations, Irish was placed under “derogation” by the government and as such the EU has not been required to provide the full range of translation services afforded to other official languages. In 2015, under pressure once again from language groups, it was announced that the government would endeavour to end this derogation status by the end of 2021 (OLRS, 2016: 25) – a far from ambitious target.

This period also saw the publication of the *Statement on the Irish Language 2006* (Government of Ireland, 2006). The appearance of this statement, a glossy full-colour document typical of government publications during the Celtic Tiger, strikingly contrasts with the black and white, pictureless *20-Year Strategy for the Irish language* published in 2010. With there having been no explicit elucidation of state ambitions for the language since the *White Paper on the Restoration of the Irish Language* (Government of Ireland, 1965), the *Statement* was greatly anticipated. While short and making few new commitments, it re-affirmed state support for the preservation of the Gaeltacht and announced the state’s intention to produce the *20-Year Strategy* (Government of Ireland, 2006: 4-6), the result of which is discussed in 4.2.2.

A year later, the *Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht* (“CLS”; Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a) was published. This report clearly demonstrated once again the most urgent need for significant reform of Gaeltacht policy, and marks the final important development regarding the language during that took place before 2008.

Although the case of the Gaeltacht was repeatedly demonstrated to be worsening throughout this time, there were nonetheless several important macro-level policy developments during this period of “minority survivalism” (Ó Giollagáin, 2014a: 25). The affluence of the time saw investment in projects such as TG4, as well as ÚnaG receiving some €25.5m in funding by 2008. This positivity was to be short-lived, however, with the 2008 crash seeing a drastic change in the policy climate which engendered these developments.

## 1.6 Thesis structure

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 offers an overview of neoliberalism as an ideological hegemony, the nature of the 2008 crash and a discussion of Irish economic development in recent decades, along with a review of relevant academic literature. Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of this study, it discusses contributions from a variety of fields, including literature on language shift in Ireland, ethnographic work in LPP, anthropologies of rural Ireland and research on economic aspects of Irish-language decline and revitalisation.

Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach used for this study. It explains how ethnographic participant observation data was used in combination with 52 semi-structured interviews, policy analysis and statistical data to “triangulate” findings.

Chapter 4 analyses Irish-language policy between 2008-18, drawing on concepts which are popular in public policy and political economy literature, but which have not been widely adopted by scholars in the field of LPP. The extreme rationalisation of the sector during this time is detailed, including the vastly disproportionate nature of the cuts to Irish-language promotion bodies such as ÚnaG and the state department responsible for the Gaeltacht. It is argued that these cuts are reflective of neoliberalism’s antipathy towards “culturalist” endeavours such as minoritised language promotion which are seen to be of little or no value to the interests of international capitalism. The content and implementation of key policies such as the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* and the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* are considered, and it is concluded that they amount to state withdrawal from the language revitalisation project on a scale not hitherto seen, with the 2008 crisis having punctuated the previous policy equilibrium and allowed for widespread rationalisation of Irish LPP.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of my ethnographic fieldwork in some of the strongest remaining Gaeltacht communities and explores the meso- and

micro-level consequences of the policy reforms detailed in Chapter 4. As well as documenting how reformed language policy impinged on the sociolinguistic vitality of these areas post-2008, broader effects of the Great Recession such as labour market transformations and increased emigration are also explored. Several case studies describe the effects of the cuts on specific institutions and community infrastructure. The chapter concludes with a discussion which further explicates how these multitudinous factors contributed to the 11.2% decrease in the daily use of Irish in the Gaeltacht between 2011-16 which was recorded in the 2016 census.

A summary of the key arguments made in this thesis as well as some more general observations on the nature of language loss in a time of various intersectional political and environmental crises are offered in Chapter 6.

## **2. Theoretical background and literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As noted in 1.1, many authors in the field of LPP have identified economic forces as being key factors driving language minoritisation, although there is very little empirical research supporting such assertions. Providing the theoretical background for this study's attempt to uncover how exactly economic disruption between 2008-18 has contributed to the minoritisation of Irish, this chapter first explores the nature of neoliberalism, the globally hegemonic economic ideology that has emerged since the mid-1970s. The Great Recession that began in 2008 is discussed, and the ways in which neoliberal boom and bust have impacted Ireland in recent decades are explored. Literature from various fields relevant to this study is then reviewed, with important deficits in our understanding of the sociolinguistic consequences of socioeconomic change being identified.

Despite Ireland's long history as a colony which helped fuel British economic growth (Coakley, 2012), it is notable that only a very small section of the literature that emerged from the language revitalisation movement since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century theorised the asymmetric power relations inherent in instances of language shift as being linked to economic exploitation. Nonetheless, important reports on language revitalisation did reference the economic difficulties facing the Gaeltacht, with the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research stating simply that "[t]he main underlying problem of the Gaeltacht is the weakness of its economic base" (CILAR, 1975: 347; see also An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge, 1963: 181-220). Furthermore, another small but important current connected the language to economics, albeit with Irish-language revitalisation being a vector for economic growth, rather than assessing the power bias inherent in capitalism as an obstacle for the language movement's efforts. Conradh na Gaeilge, for instance, established an "Industrial Committee" in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which claimed Irish was a way to stimulate the economy and promote development



in the Gaeltacht, although this committee was short-lived and never held any major influence, even within the league itself (Walsh, 2011a: 78-80). Nonetheless, over the last century opinions similar to those of this group have been espoused periodically, with various authors drawing a positive connection between language promotion and economic development. A comprehensive overview of such literature is provided by Walsh (2011a: 69-112).

Despite having this historical tradition to draw on, since its emergence as a distinct academic field in the 1970s, Irish-language sociolinguistics has generally treated economic issues as being of relatively minor concern. Although the works of authors such as Grin (1994; 2006) and Vaillancourt (1996) popularised the field of language and economics since the mid-1990s, few authors have attempted to apply such thinking to the Irish case. As section 2.6 will demonstrate, research in this area is confined to a small number of papers published in the 1980s and work by a handful of academics who have written on the matter more recently, with very little attention being paid to the major economic transformations that have taken place in recent years.

## **2.2 The emergence of neoliberal hegemony**

Neoliberalism is the name most commonly given to the present phase of capitalism, one which replaced the Keynesian and social democratic consensus that dominated in the developed west for approximately 30 years in the post-WWII period. Neoliberal ideology was originally theorised between the mid-1940s and 60s by economists such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and other members of the Mont Pelerin Society, a group Hayek helped establish in 1947 to further his ideas via an international network of think tanks (Mirowski, 2013: 44-7). Seeing attempts by states to regulate the market as being responsible for the totalitarianism of both Nazi Germany and the USSR, Hayek claimed that the redistribution of resources via welfare programmes and social planning was “the road to serfdom” (2006 [1944]) which must be avoided at all costs.

Although often conflated with laissez-faire liberalism or free-market libertarianism, neoliberalism stands apart from such ideologies. While sharing with these theories an understanding of the market as being a “super information processor” capable of distributing resources with an efficiency that human planning can never hope to match (Mirowski and Nik-Khah, 2017: 59), neoliberalism does not argue for a complete withdrawal of the state from the market as some related ideologies do. Indeed, Hayek himself claimed that “[p]robably nothing has done as much harm to the liberal cause as the wooden insistence of some liberals on certain rough rules of thumb, above all the principle of laissez-faire” (2006 [1944]: 18), and that

it is the character rather than the volume of government activity that is important . . . a government that is comparatively inactive but does the wrong things may do much more to cripple the forces of a market economy than one that is more concerned with economic affairs but confines itself to actions which assist the spontaneous forces of the economy (Hayek, 2011 [1960]: 331).

As Mirowski thus summarises, “mature neoliberalism is not at all enamoured of the minimalist night-watchman state of the classical liberal tradition” (2013: 40). Instead, it envisions a utopia consisting of “the free economy and the strong state” (Gamble, 1994), with such a state providing the legal and judicial structures required to both create and maintain the market. In contrast to neoclassical theories, neoliberalism therefore sees a role for significant state intervention in the market, but argues that economic intercessions should take place only in favour of capital, and that the state should not stray into other areas of social policy or governance (Hayek, 2006 [1944]: 43-4, 98; Mirowski, 2013). It was based on this distinction that Foucault (2008: 131) concluded that neoliberalism was not just “old wine in new bottles”, but instead marked a distinct phase in the development of capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As Chomsky (2012: 262) has pointed out, however, in practice the policies of pre-neoliberal capitalism often closely resembled those espoused by neoliberalism. While publicly advocating a market free from state interference, early capitalists depended enormously on state intervention to forcibly enclose commons, to remodel the economies of colonised areas, to create a “surplus population” which provided a cheap source of labour, etc. While philosophically distinct, neoliberalism

Neoliberalism contends that ensuring capitalist enterprises are as successful as possible will lead to the greatest aggregate benefit for all, as wealth “trickles down” (Greider, 1981) from the top of the class structure to the bottom. The pursuit of profit is therefore seen as an eminently moral act, with Milton Friedman famously declaring that “[t]he social responsibility of business is to increase profits” on this basis (2007 [1970]: 173).

Further to inevitably paving the way to totalitarianism, theorists associated with neoliberalism claim that state provision of welfare inhibits the entrepreneurial spirit naturally present in human beings, conceptualised as *homo economicus*, causing them to become lazy and dependent (Murray, 1990). By limiting the maximisation of profit in this way, welfare states inevitably act against society’s best interests. Neoliberalism thus explicitly rejects the notion of collective rights and is characterised by a strongly negative conception of liberty.

Such theoretical arguments notwithstanding, as Harvey (2005) has explained, neoliberal doctrine ultimately served to justify policy changes proposed by an international capitalist class which, due to the confluence of a number of important factors, felt their position threatened. By the end of the 1960s, almost three decades of Keynesian and social democratic policies redistributing wealth downwards, the oil shock and the emergence of numerous anti-systemic movements across the world had combined to see the balance of power shift firmly away from capital. These and various other internal contradictions of Keynesianism (see Blyth, 2016, drawing on Kalecki, 1943) saw rates of profit falling globally, with the “stagflation” period of the early 1970s being the most severe economic crisis since the 1930s. Both stagflation and many of the forces depressing rates of profit were eventually overcome by the abandonment of Keynesianism in favour of neoliberal reforms, which were promoted as policy solutions by a capitalist class anxious to shift the balance of power away from labour (Harvey, 2005: 19; Blyth, 2016: 220).

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can nonetheless certainly be seen as a continuation of centuries-old capitalist strategies of accumulation, albeit in an intensified form.

This intensification of neoliberalism over the following years saw spending on a wide range of welfare programmes reduced in states across the developed west. While the concept of austerity only came to public prominence after 2008, scholars such as Pierson (2002) had long since claimed that neoliberal states entered a period of “permanent austerity” in the 1970s, when the growing costs of welfare programmes began to be tackled through retrenchment and the privatisation of various aspects of the public sector.

Although the implementation of neoliberalism on a global scale has been an uneven and contested process, it is fundamental to the process of globalisation which has occurred in recent decades (Gamble, 2009: 67), and has become “a hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political economic practices to the point where it is now part of the common sense way we interpret, live in, and understand the world” (Harvey, 2007: 22). As such it can be seen to fit Hall’s notion of a “policy paradigm” so ingrained that it is taken for granted and enacted without question (Hall, 1993: 279; see also Gramsci, 1992).

In the context of this thesis’ emphasis on the effects of the 2008 economic crisis, it is important to note that the political manipulation of crises has been a key strategy through which neoliberal goals have been furthered (Klein, 2007). With the mass of the population otherwise occupied by the exigencies of daily life and the political elite generally desperate for solutions that appease international investors, crises often see the opening of a “policy window” (Cairney, 2012: 237), allowing for the implementation of measures that would be politically unthinkable in times of relative stability. “Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change”, as Friedman put it (2002 [1962]: xiv).

Further to manipulating crises in order to ensure pro-market reforms, neoliberalism is also crisis-generating. While the cyclical move from boom to bust has long been accepted by economists as fundamental to capitalism’s mechanics, this trend has been greatly intensified since the 1970s, with there having been hundreds of financial crises since then, compared to relatively few prior to this period of reform (Harvey, 2011).

Despite its claims to be an efficient way to ensure a just distribution of resources, a vast body of research across the social sciences has documented how neoliberalism has ultimately served to create enormous levels of inequality which, in turn, have egregious social consequences (e.g. Piketty, 2014; Pickett and Wilkinson, 2010). It has significantly contributed to the creating of deeply precarious living conditions for huge sections of the world's population and has led to a series of interconnected environmental catastrophes so severe that they present existential challenges regarding the very future of civilisation (Saad-Filho and Johnston, 2006; Standing, 2014; Verhaeghe, 2014; Monbiot, 2016).

As will be demonstrated throughout this work, neoliberalism also inherently conflicts with efforts to ensure the vitality of minoritised languages. Through opposing state intervention in areas which do not facilitate the needs of capital, the adoption of neoliberal policies has “profound implications for the orthodox understanding of language planning” (Williams and Morris, 2000: 180). While not always explicitly framed in such terms, language revitalisation typically requires the redistribution of resources to marginalised groups (see 4.2.10.1). With neoliberalism conceiving the market as a moral as well as economic force, it argues against such redistributive “social justice” policies on the grounds that they require the redistribution of resources which the market has justly allocated. It is thus in fundamental tension with many language revitalisation efforts, seeing them as neither social nor just. Chapters 4 and 5 explore in detail the implications of this tension after 2008 in the Republic of Ireland, which, as section 2.4 explains, is an extremely neoliberal country.

## **2.3 The Great Recession**

The economic crash of 2008 marked the onset of the third generalised crisis of industrial capitalism in its 250-odd year history as a global economic force, seeing neoliberalism enter a period of transnational crisis (Gamble, 2009: 10). Similar to the depression of the 1930s, the only other crisis of this scale in capitalism's history, the 2008 crash began in the United States, but quickly

became an international phenomenon whose ramifications continue to be felt across much of the world ten years after it began.

The early tremors that foreshadowed what would become known as the “Great Recession” (Smith et al., 2011) were felt when the “credit crunch” began in late 2007, with the Bear Stearns investment bank announcing significant losses and a run on British high-street bank Northern Rock, the first such run in Britain in over 100 years. It was in 2008, however, that the full magnitude of the coming disruptions started to become clear, as the insolvency of much of the financial sector and the collapse of Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers quickly led to international crisis (Gamble, 2009: 23).

As Gamble has explained, the roots of the Great Recession can be traced to the policies adopted in the 1970s as a way to overcome stagflation, with the solution to one crisis ultimately generating the next (2009: 10). While, then, it was neoliberal economics which caused the 2008 crash (see Blyth, 2013 and Bresser-Pereira, 2010 for detailed discussion of this process), the Great Recession was peculiar in that it did not see capitalism adopt a new regime of accumulation in response to the crisis, as has historically occurred in response to such challenges, such as the move from Keynesianism to neoliberalism. Instead, neoliberal measures were intensified after the crash, which was used as an opportunity to further the programme of privatisation and restructuring to a degree not previously possible (Crouch, 2011; Mirowski, 2013). In accordance with neoliberalism’s requirements for implementing pro-capital interventions, both nation-states and supra-national bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank enforced harsh programmes of austerity which saw an enormous transfer of wealth to the upper-classes. As the following section describes, the Republic of Ireland was one of the countries most severely affected by the recession, in no small part due to its having adopted neoliberal policies with particular vigour in the years preceding 2008.

The disastrous social consequences of austerity have been documented at length in an enormous body of literature produced in recent years (e.g. Cooper

and Whyte, 2017; Mendoza, 2015; Varoufakis, 2016). Notably, however, there has been very little substantive discussion of the Great Recession in LPP literature, a deficit which this thesis addresses.

## **2.4 Irish economic development – peaks and troughs over recent decades**

As Britain's first colony, Ireland was chronically underdeveloped by the time three quarters of the island gained political independence in 1922 (Coakley, 2012). With the legacy of centuries of colonialism being exceedingly difficult to overcome, the Irish Free State (as it was initially called) remained one of the most impoverished polities in Europe for most the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lee, 1989: 664). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, however, Ireland's<sup>4</sup> economic fortunes were transformed, triggering a rapid period of "catch up" growth (McDonough, 2010; Kirby, 2010). This transformation became known as the "Celtic Tiger". Although this term was first used in 1994 (Kirby et al., 2002: 17-8), as McDonough (2010) has demonstrated, the roots of the phenomenon can be traced back to 1987, when several key policy changes were implemented.

The Irish economy was rapidly neoliberalised during the Celtic Tiger, which saw widespread privatisation and extremely low levels of regulatory oversight in the financial services and corporate sectors, and the development of Ireland as a prototypical "competition state" which serves the needs of capital above those of its residents (Kirby and Murphy, 2011). Based initially on the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) of international corporations – for whom the country operates as a tax haven (McCabe, 2013: 168-70) – the Celtic Tiger later saw the development of a property bubble, with house prices trebling between 1998-2008 (Gamble, 2009: 3). In line with international trends, labour was greatly weakened during this period, as trade unions adopted a managerialist negotiating strategy known as "social partnership" which effectively brought an end to industrial action, defanging what had within recent memory been an

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<sup>4</sup> For reasons of brevity, "Ireland" is used to refer to the Republic of Ireland throughout this thesis.

active and militant trade union movement (McDonough, 2010: 452; McCabe, 2012; section 5.6).

Although the steep increase in the country's GDP at this time saw it heralded internationally as an exemplary case illustrating the virtues of neoliberal policy, Kirby has characterised this "economic success" as being a "social failure" (2010: 7), due to wealth being squandered and structural inequalities and exclusion in Irish society going largely unchallenged.

The recession which began in 2008, of course, brought an abrupt end to this high-growth period. Having thoroughly embraced the neoliberal model, the country suffered enormously when the crisis struck. As Blyth explains

[t]he combined result of the property-bubble collapse and the banking system implosion was "the largest compound decline in GNP of any industrialized country over the 2007-2010 period." Government debt increased by 320 percent to over 110 percent of GDP as the government spent some 70 billion euros to shore up the banking system. Meanwhile, unemployment rose to 14 percent by mid-2011 [from approximately 5% pre-crash], a figure that would have been higher had it not been for emigration (Blyth, 2013: 66).

Responding to pressure from both national and international elites, the Irish government implemented a harsh programme of austerity consisting of a drastic contraction in public spending combined with tax increases that were particularly regressive for those on lower and middle incomes. These measures were necessary to fund the bailing out of the banks, which, as noted above, was itself an excellent example of the sort of pro-capital intervention that neoliberalism favours. As Blyth observed, this bailout cost Ireland's inhabitants an enormous €70 billion, described by the IMF as "the costliest banking crisis in advanced economies since at least the Great Depression" (Laeven and Valencia 2012: 20). Indeed, so severe was the crisis that supervision of the Irish economy was ultimately taken over by the IMF-ECB-EC Troika between 2010-13. A 2016 report for the IMF retrospectively observed that "[t]he extent and rapidity of Ireland's fiscal deterioration in the latter part of the 2000s was virtually unprecedented among post war industrial country experiences" (Donovan, 2016: 11).



The magnitude of this crisis saw the proportion of the population deemed to be suffering from deprivation almost double between 2007-10 – increasing from 11.8% to 22.5% (NERI, 2012: 75). By April 2013, the IMF calculated that a “staggering” 23% of the Irish labour force was either un- or underemployed (IMF, 2013: 26). As a result of this, some 610,000 people (of a population of 4.59 million) left the country between 2008-15 (Glynn and O’Connell, 2017: 299), averaging one departure every six minutes in the twelve months to April 2013 (Smyth, 2013; section 5.5). Following the international pattern described in the previous section, despite this crisis of the neoliberal model, Ireland after 2008 saw an “intensification of neoliberal policies” (Allen, 2012: 425), rather than any kind of reversal or reorientation of this dominant economic orthodoxy.

Notably, however, by 2016 the Irish economy had emerged from the crisis, and by 2018 the country’s economy was growing at three times the Eurozone average. While the activity of corporations registered in Ireland for tax avoidance purposes but with no significant operations in the country significantly distorts these figures (Irish Times, 2018a), by April 2018 unemployment had nonetheless fallen to 5.9%, just 0.1% above the rate a decade previously (CSO, 2018a).

Despite the Irish economy having moved from peak to trough and back again in recent years, the spatial distribution of the recovery has been very uneven, occurring mostly in the main population centres, particularly Dublin. As Taft explains “[w]hether in the last four years or the last year, Dublin has generated approximately two-thirds of jobs . . . Outside Dublin, even though 70 percent of the total labour force resides there, only a third of jobs were generated” (Taft, 2016a). The age-graded nature of the recovery was also marked, with youth unemployment remaining high by April 2018, at 12% (CSO, 2018b).

In 2017 the *Pobal HP Deprivation Index* concluded that the country as a whole had recovered from the recession by just two-fifths (Hasse and Pratschke, 2017a: 8). Disposable incomes, too, remained well below their peak even after growth had returned (Taft, 2016b), although were predicted to finally rise come 2019 (Irish Times, 2017a). With chain migration continuing to entice people to

emigrate, by 2017 more Irish people were still leaving the country than returning (Irish Times, 2017b). Projections suggest that public expenditure per capita will not exceed 2008 levels until 2023, 15 years after the crash (Taft, 2018). In light of this, many have referred to the post-2008 period as being “a lost decade” (Irish Independent, 2018), with the scars of austerity running deep in Irish society. This is particularly true in much of the Gaeltacht, as this study will demonstrate.

As a result of the policies of recent decades, Ireland has been consistently ranked as one of the most globalised countries in the world. Indeed, it was placed second on the 2017 index of globalisation, which collates a variety of economic, political and cultural data for all countries, including number of cross-border financial transactions, investment and revenue flows, capital restrictions, number of international treaties ratified and cross-border information flows (KOF, 2017). Mufwene’s assertion that “[t]he higher the local globalization index, the stronger the tendency toward monolingualism” (2016: 132) is thus most pertinent to the fate of Irish. Accordingly, Romaine has claimed that “Irish warrants our gaze for what it may tell us of the fate that globalization portends for the survival of the world’s linguistic diversity” (2008: 13), an opportunity which this study aims to exploit.

## **2.5 The Irish language in development studies and socioeconomic literature**

With Ireland as a whole, and rural areas in particular, suffering from sluggish development and depopulation for a great deal of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the wake of the 2008 crash, it is of no surprise that rural development is an important field of study in Irish academic circles. Most probably due to the fact that the Gaeltacht is home to only a tiny percentage of the population (2% in 2016), issues pertaining to Gaeltacht-specific development are often most notable in this body of literature by their absence, however. To take one relatively recent example, *Rural Economic Development in Ireland*, a major work published by Teagasc (“The Irish Agriculture and Development Authority”), contains all but no reference to the Gaeltacht (O’Donoghue et al.,

2014). Acknowledging the differential impact the recession had on rural Ireland, where unemployment increased at double the rate of urban areas, (O'Donoghue, 2014: 19), the report sets about discussing in great detail those areas which offer potential for promoting economic development in rural areas, as well as those sectors which are particularly problematic in developmental terms.

Despite the impressive scope of the book – at more than 500 pages long and with over 30 contributors – the Irish language is not mentioned once. References to the Gaeltacht do not go beyond acknowledging the existence of ÚnaG and the Department of Community, Regional and Gaeltacht Affairs as being among the many “enterprise promotion agencies” which focus on rural development (Breathnach, 2014: 317). This trend is reflected throughout much of the academic literature of recent decades, including Curtin and Wilson (1989), Varley et al. (1991) and McDonagh (2001) – all important works in the field of rural development in Ireland which make little or no reference to the Gaeltacht.

Two exceptions to this tendency are, however, worthy of mention. Firstly, McDonagh (2002) contains a valuable chapter on ÚnaG written by the then-deputy CEO of the organisation in which he discusses the unique challenges the “periphery of the periphery” presents for economic developers, including the inability to generate economies of scale and the discontinuous nature of the Gaeltacht (Ó hAoláin, 2002). McDonagh et al.'s work (2009) also contains a chapter on Gaeltacht-specific development, drawing on the findings of the CLS report which was referenced in 1.5 (Ó Giollagáin and Mac Donnacha, 2009).

Similar to most academic work on rural development, the pattern of neglecting the Gaeltacht is also visible in much official state development policy. As with the Teagasc work cited above, the important policy document, *Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020* (Government of Ireland, 2014), failed to make a single reference to the Gaeltacht or the Irish language in its 474 pages. Although the National Development Plan *Ireland 2040*, launched in February

2018, discusses the need to increase funding to the Gaeltacht, as sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 show, these proposals are in themselves extremely problematic. Walsh (2004: 1) cites further examples of government development policies published in recent decades ignoring the Gaeltacht, and Williams (1988: 267) has claimed that the disregarding of minoritised languages in development studies is a common phenomenon internationally, with language issues apparently not aligning with the concerns of those involved in this discipline.

A further illustration of the peripheral nature of the Gaeltacht in Irish academia can be found in recent literature on political economy. Although much work assessing the effects of the Great Recession on Irish society has been published since 2008, none of these studies make any reference to the Gaeltacht or the Irish language. Despite the fact that provision for the language was hit disproportionately hard by austerity – as Chapter 4 will demonstrate – significant works such as Allen and O’Boyle (2013), Nagle and Coulter (2015), Moore-Cherry et al. (2017) or Roche et al. (2017) fail to afford this issue any attention whatsoever.

## **2.6 Sociolinguistic literature on the Irish language in an economic context**

The field of Gaeltacht sociolinguistics is quite an active one. Valuable contributions have recently been made by Lenoach et al. (2012) and Péterváry et al. (2014), who document the asymmetrical English-dominant bilingualism of children currently being brought up as L1 Irish speakers (see 5.10). Ní Ghearáin (2011; 2018) has addressed issues of institution-led corpus planning and code-switching in Gaeltacht communities, discussing the reluctance of the L1 community to adopt official neologisms. Ó Murchadha (2011) has discussed related issues of standardisation and done a large amount of work on language attitudes of young people in the Gaeltacht and the “post-traditional” Irish of “new speakers”, including measuring the overt and covert prestige of various new and traditional dialects (2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2018). “New speakers” have been the focus of a great deal of research in recent

years, with Walsh, O'Rourke and Rowland (2015) and Walsh and O'Rourke (2014; O'Rourke and Walsh, 2015) making significant contributions to this previously understudied area.

Ó hlfearnáin has studied issues of prestige and speaker attitudes to language shift in the Gaeltacht (2010; 2013) and has edited two important Irish-language sociolinguistics textbooks, covering a wide range of fundamental sociolinguistic concepts (Ó hlfearnáin and Ní Neachtain, 2012; Ó hlfearnáin, 2019). Notably, however, neither volume addresses the economic aspects of language use or shift. Ní Dhúda has recently discussed the strength of the Mayo Gaeltacht based on census data and other quantitative studies, as well as the importance of linguistic ideologies and “language managers” in promoting the use of Irish in weak Gaeltacht areas (Ní Dhúda, 2014; 2017; 2018). Rowland (2016; 2018) has offered a historical look at ideological conflicts regarding language revitalisation during the 1960s and 70s, examining how the modernization of Irish society at that time led to the emergence of various pressure groups who campaigned for changes to language policy, arguing either for greater or less state involvement in the area. Brennan's recent work (2013; Brennan and Costa, 2016) has addressed the symbolic use of Irish as part of a marketing strategy of “de-homogenisation” by businesses in non-Gaeltacht contexts.

An important, if relatively small, current of literature has examined issues of economic development in the Gaeltacht. As will be seen, however, very little of this research was conducted in the last decade, despite the significance of the economic fluctuations seen during this time.

Breathnach is one author to have previously undertaken such work. A geographer by training, he analysed Ireland as a neo-colonial economy whose main function since the development of industrial capitalism has been to supply cheap labour and resources to core industrial economies (1988). His writing has focused on how this has influenced rural development, with him seeing “the reorientation of agricultural production away from local needs to external markets” (1988: 42) as an inherent structural weakness which Irish

rurality cannot overcome given current patterns of uneven development and core-periphery relations. Focusing specifically on the Gaeltacht, Breathnach applied a similar analysis in addressing the structural challenges which restrict development in such peripheral areas, especially within the industrialisation paradigm which has been applied there in recent decades. As long as organisations such as ÚnaG continue to follow the strategy favoured by the state throughout the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century of attempting to base growth on FDI, the Gaeltacht, Breathnach contended, can never really be ensured of its future (see section 5.3.4 for further discussion of this issue). While discussing the important development of the co-operative movement in the 1960s and 70s as a grassroots reaction to the failure of government institutions and FDI to provide a sufficient basis for sustainable Gaeltacht communities, Breathnach also observed that many of these were short-lived and under-resourced (1986: 105; see also 5.9.1). Furthermore, despite ÚnaG being founded in response to demands for a democratic authority which would greatly enhance Gaeltacht autonomy, it is a relatively weak institution which lacks the power to affect the sort of changes Breathnach proposes (2000; see also Ó Neachtain, 2014; section 1.4). Indeed, changes to the structure of ÚnaG that were brought about by the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* have served to greatly reduce the democratic control that Gaeltacht communities have over the institution, as 4.2.4 describes.

Despite the importance of these contributions to the study of the Gaeltacht in economic terms, Breathnach's work in recent years has moved away from this issue. He now directs his attention to issues of rural development more generally, being one of the contributors to the Teagasc work cited in 2.5. While his earlier works provide a useful basis for this study, they are by now quite heavily dated and do not address more recent trends in the Irish economy.

Ó Cinnéide and Keane also offered an analysis of the Gaeltacht which focused on similar issues. Like Breathnach, they too found fault with the weakness of the institutions charged with promoting community vitality in the Gaeltacht, arguing that the imposition of various development models by outside

institutions has led to failure, disappointment and a widespread disillusionment with top-down approaches to community – and therefore language – revitalisation. To address this deficit, a more democratic and participative approach, as well as a large-scale decentralisation of power to local institutions was advocated, with the authors claiming such a model would do much to empower what are often largely disenfranchised communities who lack an “acceptable” development plan (Ó Cinnéide and Keane, 1990: 475).

In a perceptive observation made almost thirty years ago, they stated that

[i]t is becoming increasingly apparent that rural communities cannot rely on government or other external agencies to promote their areas. Rather, the communities themselves must take an active responsibility for developing and testing economic development strategies (Ó Cinnéide and Keane, 1990: 485).

Despite the veracity of this observation (which is equally valid today, as Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate), it is notable that the authors did not situate this trend in any wider ideological context in the way Breathnach did. Nor did this work offer an in-depth analysis as to why the “inhospitable business environment” of the Conamara Gaeltacht (Ó Cinnéide and Keane, 1990: 481) is so unamenable to economic development, especially in light of it being close to a major economic centre (Galway city) – which is certainly not the case for many other Gaeltacht areas. As with Breathnach, Ó Cinnéide and Keane have not followed up this research in the intervening decades, meaning that the significant developments of the Celtic Tiger era were unaddressed by these and similar writers. Neither was work by Mac an Iomaire (1983) or the valuable contribution by Commins (1988) on socioeconomic development and language maintenance in the Gaeltacht – which foreshadowed much of Ó Riagáin’s later work (discussed below) – developed, meaning that some promising work on language and economics in the Gaeltacht petered out before the economic transformation of the 1990s had taken place.

In more recent years, Ó Giollagáin has attempted to situate Irish language sociolinguistics in its global economic context. Indeed, in a 2011 work, Ó Giollagáin made a comparison between the crisis of the world’s linguistic

heritage and the global financial crisis – noting that each crisis affected large groups of people, disproportionately affected the poor, and was a source of ongoing controversy and uncertainty (2011: 146). Notably, however, he did not argue that there is any causal relationship between the two crises, as this thesis will contend. Ó Giollagáin has claimed, however, that the current globalised economic order is one which is deeply infused with the cultural values of the developed west and that neoliberal policies are creating a “frontier linguistics” – the ever-expanding capacity of English to reach every part of a community’s life – which is inhibiting the social reproduction of bilingualism in many minoritised language communities (Ó Giollagáin, 2008).

Addressing the Irish case more specifically, Ó Giollagáin has argued that the success of the counter-revolution in the Irish Civil War (1922-23) led to reactionary forces abandoning much of the language revitalisation rhetoric which had initially inspired the War of Independence (1919-21). As such, commitment to the policy of “re-Gaelicisation” began to wane even in the early years of the state, a waning which was accelerated greatly in the 1960s and 70s (Ó Giollagáin, 2014a; section 1.4). Furthermore, he has claimed that policy developments in recent years have seen much of the state’s remaining commitment to language promotion dissipated and replaced by a neoliberal model of language planning (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b). While a valid observation – and, indeed, one which is elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this thesis – little attention is paid by Ó Giollagáin to the link between the Great Recession and the economic exigencies which likely drove many of the policy decisions taken in the wake of the 2008 crash.

Nonetheless, work such as Ó Giollagáin’s challenges much of the discourse that revolves around LPP in Ireland. Significantly for this thesis, he has claimed that rather than being a continuation of the incrementalist withdrawing of commitment and resources from language revitalisation efforts that began in the 1960s, state policy in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has “been effectively inflated to a fully-fledged policy of abandonment” (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 102). While Ó Giollagáin’s sentiment is perhaps stated in hyperbolic



terms, the findings of this thesis do accord with the notion that state withdrawal from the revitalisation project has intensified rapidly in the last decade.

In a paper analysing recent policy developments, Ó Giollagáin details the state's disregard of those recommendations made by studies such as the CLS, which was written with the goal of informing official policy (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a). The apparent half-heartedness of the state's engagement with these recommendations and the non-implementation of the *20-Year Strategy* (see 4.2.2) which followed them are, he contends, a response from the powerful whose "main concern at this stage is to effect budgetary contraction" (2014b: 117) and who see the crisis of the Gaeltacht as a marginal issue unworthy of serious consideration.

Despite this prescience, Ó Giollagáin fails to go further in locating the nature of these policy abandonments in terms of the class bias that is inherent in austerity. While he draws attention to the scale of state disengagement and does much to situate these developments in the broader context of globalisation, an analysis of *why* these policy choices are being enacted remains absent. An attempt at offering such an analysis of the *20-Year Strategy*, the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* and other official policies will be made in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

One of the few other scholars who has made a systematic study of the Irish language in economic terms in recent years is John Walsh. As noted in 2.1, for over a hundred years the revitalisation movement has asserted the importance of Irish as a vital source of traits such as group cohesiveness, confidence, identity and innovation, and claimed that these traits can aid with the development of economic growth. Recent expositions of such assertions can be found in Bradley and Kennelly (2008; 2013). Walsh's work attempts to add an explicit theoretical and empirical basis to contentions of this sort, investigating how, or if, the language can be used as part of a wider programme of socioeconomic regeneration. In doing so he has endeavoured to provide what he terms a "linguistic political economy of development" rooted in the Irish case (Walsh, 2006: 143; 2009: 75).

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach which draws on both sociolinguistic approaches and development studies models such as the UN's *Human Development Index*, Walsh challenges the contemporary modernisation approach to economic development offered by both neo-classical and neoliberal economics. The modernisation paradigm, he observes, typically views issues of language as tangential – at best – to economic development, or, at worst, directly contraindicated to it. This approach, Walsh contends, therefore leaves little room to manoeuvre for those who wish to address issues involving linguistic diversity. Despite it having been the dominant ideology in Ireland since the founding of the Free State, and particularly so since the *Economic Development* policy document was implemented from the early 1960s onwards (Bew and Patterson, 1982: 118; section 1.4), Walsh sees the modernisation paradigm as a wholly deficient way to theorise development (2009: 74).

Attempting to address this theoretical deficit, Walsh has used various instances of economic development in the Gaeltacht and of language-based enterprises located outside the Gaeltacht as case studies to examine the link between language revitalisation and economic performance. While avoiding reductionist and economic measures of development such as GDP or GNP, Walsh contests that the human development model proposed by Sen (1999) would suggest that minoritised languages can indeed have a positive effect on development and human welfare when understood from a holistic point of view. Furthermore, he claims that this can be equally true in the Gaeltacht as for the country as a whole (Walsh, 2010: 77).

As well as exploring this relationship between language and development, Walsh has written extensively on economic policy with regard to the Gaeltacht. Citing the example of ÚnaG and its predecessor Gaeltarra Éireann, he has noted that historically an awareness of language planning has been almost totally lacking from strategies which aimed to develop the Gaeltacht and integrate it into the wider economy (2006: 142). Evidenced with material gathered through interviewing stakeholders in various Gaeltacht areas, as well

as a study of historic policy documents, Walsh notes that Irish-language organisations for many years showed a distinct lack of ambition towards becoming involved in national development programmes (2006: 142). Despite this, he claims that an awareness has grown since the mid-1990s of the limited linguistic value of this approach. Attempting to address these concerns, in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ÚnaG made moves towards re-orientating its policies and embracing a more holistic view of community development, one not solely rooted in the modernisationist, industrial paradigm. This re-orientation has led to a tension emerging between various civil society development and/or business groups in the Gaeltacht and ÚnaG, however, with people largely viewing it with a mixture of cynicism and disdain (Walsh, 2010: 128-30), similar to the tensions noted by Ó Cinnéide and Keane (1990) thirty years earlier, and those discussed in 5.3.4.

Walsh's work provides a valuable contribution to the literature and offers useful data on language and economics in Ireland. It is not clear, however, that the development and regeneration that Irish supposedly promotes is not purely the product of public subsidy, rather than being connected to language *per se*. With ÚnaG directing government subsidies into the Gaeltacht and the Irish-language sector to a degree that other rural areas rarely receive, this regeneration could, instead, be the result of a multiplier effect which could just as easily exist in any other sector. With the extent of the cutbacks in the last few years and the waning of the state's commitment to the Gaeltacht, it may be the case that more recent data would provide a less significant correlation between Irish and positive developmental outcomes.

For all its merits, work such as that of Walsh remains peripheral, having failed to inform either mainstream academic discussions of economic development or government policy, as section 2.5 demonstrated. In spite of the strengths of this work, it would appear that issues such as cultural and linguistic promotion are simply not seen as a priority under current development paradigms and that arguments which contest the validity or efficaciousness of such a model fall on deaf ears. Indeed, Walsh notes that this is a key way in which the

modernisation paradigm impinges on language revitalisation efforts (2011: 168-71).

Another author whose work has been influential in the formulation of this PhD is Ó Croidheáin (2006), who offers a framework which addresses gaps common in other literature and goes some way towards explaining why efforts such as Walsh's have relatively little mainstream impact. Adopting a Marxist reading of the place of the language in Irish society throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ó Croidheáin presents an ideological position which has been largely absent from other works in the field. Notable for its engagement with class dynamics as they pertain to language and the use of the historical materialist paradigm, his book goes a long way toward filling a theoretical void unaddressed by the works of Walsh or Ó Giollagáin. While published in 2006, the book makes much use of case studies and data gathered in the late 1990s and so is by now somewhat dated. Despite this, it is exceptional for its explicit engagement with the materialist basis of language minoritisation in Ireland throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, examining the ways in which the unequal distribution of resources and class privilege in Irish society conditioned the form of both language shift and attempts to reverse it.

Positioning himself in opposition to analyses which focus primarily on official state language policy (e.g. Ó Riain, 1994), Ó Croidheáin challenges conventional, "culturalist" accounts of the social relevance and standing of Irish. Through adopting a radical political outlook, he provides a unique analysis which, while acknowledging the social antagonisms and class stratification produced by capitalism, avoids descending into economic reductionism.

Ó Croidheáin is clearly indebted to the works of author and republican activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain, who espoused a similarly radical and anti-capitalist view of the language (Ó Cadhain, 1969), a view that influenced activist groups such as *Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta* and *Misneach*, and which continues to hold a certain currency (e.g. Mac Ionnrachtaigh, 2013; Mag Uidhir, 2018). Such sentiments have rarely been expressed in detail in an

academic context in recent years, however, a fact perhaps reflective of the wider marginalisation of the radical left in Ireland in the wake of decades of social partnership and the Celtic Tiger era (Allen, 2013: 164, see also 5.6).

Similar to Ó Giollagáin (2014a: 26), Ó Croidheáin notes the omnipresence of Anglo-American culture as being an important factor in the attrition of Irish use in the Gaeltacht. Unlike Ó Giollagáin, though, he situates this phenomenon as being a form of neo-colonial hegemony, inherently linked to

a global system of international capitalism that seeks to homogenise markets by reducing national and linguistic boundaries, thereby increasing power and profits at the expense of the well-being and autonomy of national populations (Ó Croidheáin, 2006: 18).

While such an argument ignores some of the mechanisms through which capital extracts profit from heterogeneity (Grin, 1999), Ó Croidheáin's work is nonetheless valuable for challenging the prevailing culturalist model that is so often a cornerstone of the Irish-language movement. He claims that in order to effectively promote Irish, a broader struggle based on issues of resource distribution must be waged to prevent the co-option of the language movement by institutionalism. So great are the "homogenising processes of international capital" (2006: 27) which he sees as responsible for the language's marginalisation that they can only be challenged as part of a broader struggle which seeks common cause with other social movements aiming to overthrow capitalism. Unlike the work of Walsh, Ó Giollagáin, or others who address language planning and economics, Ó Croidheáin makes little attempt at offering a programme of reformist policy recommendations, instead arguing for the fundamental transformation of Irish society and the abolition of capitalism as being prerequisites for saving the language (2006: 18, 310-11). In making such proposals, Ó Croidheáin's position is reminiscent of Bourdieu's view that language revitalisation requires "a total struggle" (1991: 57), although Ó Croidheáin gives little practical advice about how such a struggle could be waged in an Irish context.

With the notable exception of Ó Croidheáin, other Irish LPP works avoid explicit application of a class analysis. While at times identifiable as a background theme and subtle subtext, for instance in Ó Giollagáin's identification of the current language policy regime as being neoliberal (Ó Giollagáin, 2015), an explicit discussion of neoliberalism's class biases and the implications such prejudices have for marginal, rural communities like the Gaeltacht has not been forthcoming. Following Ó Croidheáin's lead, this thesis will attempt to explicitly engage with the class dynamics inherent in neoliberalism, and capitalism more generally (Harvey, 2007: 22), and explore their implications for language revitalisation efforts in neoliberal economies (see in particular section 5.2.3 for a discussion of social class in the Gaeltacht and its relevance to the issue of language policy; also Ó Croidheáin, 2006: 29).

One other important author that has brought a discussion of class and economic development into the discourse on language shift in Ireland is Ó Riagáin. In seminal works such as *Language Policy and Social Reproduction* (1997), Ó Riagáin demonstrates the way in which the changing economic dynamics of Gaeltacht life contributed to language shift in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see 1.4).

In order to help address the long-standing confusion of the ultimate goal of state language policy, Ó Riagáin draws a distinction between its revivalist and maintenance aspects. The goal of the former is seen as the re-establishment of Irish in areas where it had ceased to be spoken, whereas the latter seeks the preservation of Irish as a vernacular in the Gaeltacht. As Ó Riagáin explains, the maintenance component of Irish LPP largely took the form of a regional economic development programme for the Gaeltacht (2008: 56). As described in 1.4, these efforts were not, however, sufficient to counteract the socioeconomic transformations that took place in Irish society from the 1960s onwards. Similar to Commins (1988: 25), Ó Riagáin notes that language shift towards English is “both a symptom and a consequence of large-scale economic and social changes that relate to the modernisation of Irish society” (1996: 48). He thus very explicitly locates his analysis of Irish-language

minoritisation in an assessment of economic transformation. For him, as with Ó Croidheáin, the relevance of economic and social policies that are unrelated to language have “consequences for language maintenance objectives [which] were, and are, extensive and of more importance than language policies *per se*” (1997: vii; see also Romaine, quoted in 1.1 above).

Other work by Ó Riagáin (2007), following Hannan and Tovey (1978), relates issues of class stratification to questions of ethnocultural identity and discusses the role of cultural or linguistic capital in class reproduction. The emphasis here is largely on language ideologies and prestige, however, and does not attempt to address why language shift continues apace in the Gaeltacht or why state support has declined so significantly in recent decades and years.

While the works of Ó Giollagáin, Walsh, Ó Croidheáin and Ó Riagáin provide much of the main theoretical background for this study, it is worth noting that several other authors have made occasional attempts to situate Irish-language revitalisation in a broader political and economic context, albeit in a fashion more often rhetorical than analytical. They frequently follow a logic similar to that espoused by Ó Croidheáin or Ó Cadhain in calling for the language movement to develop links with groups that seek to challenge dominant economic paradigms, such as the anti-globalisation movement or environmental campaigns. McCloskey, for instance, has declared that

[t]he effort to support Irish should ideally involve trans-national alliances with the marginalised and often impoverished groups who are trying to organise across the globe to resist the coercion of powerful national and international elites. The effort to support Irish is in fact one strand, or ought to be one strand, in an international effort to open cracks, however small, in the dreary homogeneity of culture and ideology created by global capitalism (McCloskey, 2001: 42; see also Holloway’s 2010 work on opening “cracks” in capitalism).

Similar sentiments have been expressed by Cronin, who has called for a series of interconnected revolutions to take place in response to the cultural, environmental and social challenges presented by neoliberal globalisation. Although offering little by way of practical advice as to how such revolutions

could be brought about in the face of the globalised capitalist panopticon, Cronin polemically proposes they would bring about an ecologically sustainable way of living in which power would be decentralised and resources would be distributed more equitably (2011: 228-35).

Several other authors have also commented on this link between the revitalisation movement and a broader struggle against neoliberalism, with Kirby (2004), Soper (2013) and Mag Uidhir (2018) all expressing similar views to Cronin and McCloskey. Mac Síomóin (2006) has also discussed the need for Irish-language activists to link their struggle with an understanding of other oppressed and minoritised groups in order to affect a process of de-colonisation, following Memmi (1990) and Fanon (2001). Section 5.6 of this thesis discusses the sectionalism of the Irish-language movement and offers some thoughts on why such links between language activists and those engaged in other forms of anti-systemic activism have thus far not emerged.

Mac Síomóin has also written about the challenges faced by Catalan-language activists in confronting the forces of neoliberalism and discussed lessons from their experience that would be of benefit to efforts in Ireland (2005). More recently he has echoed the sentiments of Ó Croidheáin and Ó Giollagáin that the steady encroachment of Anglo-American consumer culture, claimed to be inherently linked to neoliberalism, constitutes the “third colonisation of Ireland” and presents a key challenge for the survival of Irish (Mac Síomóin, 2014: 111-8).

While, then, numerous authors have expressed an awareness of a link between the current status of the Irish language and our economic system, the overall corpus of language and economics works in Ireland remains quite small, with only a handful of authors discussing the matter in detail. While some significant articles were written in the 1980s, writers such as Breathnach and Ó Cinnéide and Keane soon turned their focus to wider issues of rural development, and while Ó Croidheáin’s one-off contribution is valuable, excepting some largely polemical works, it is only Walsh and Ó Giollagáin who have written widely about this topic recently. When the highly developed nature



of Irish-language scholarship as a whole is considered – particularly in terms of literature and folklore studies – it seems surprising that this important issue has not received more attention to date. Significantly, despite the extent of the reforms of public policy and state expenditure that the 2008 crisis engendered (Mercille and Murphy, 2015), those few explicit references to the implications of austerity for language policy in both Irish and international LPP literature have, to date, been extremely limited in their scope (e.g. Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 116-7; Ó Flatharta, 2010: 388; Williams, 2012: 178), a deficit addressed in this work.

## **2.7 Critical Sociolinguistics**

Another body of literature of relevance to this study is that of critical sociolinguistics, a subfield of sociolinguistics which centres “questions of power and inequality” and investigates how language is of importance “socially, politically and economically” (Heller, Pietikäinen and Pujolar, 2018: 2). Similar to the approach of this thesis which is described in the following chapter, critical sociolinguistics very often adopts an ethnographic methodology for the purposes of data collection (e.g. Heller, 2006, 2011; Duchêne, Moyer and Roberts, 2013). Furthermore, questions of power and resource distribution – key issues discussed in this study – serve as a significant source of inspiration for those working in this field:

language is involved in the varied ways in which categorization, selection, and legitimization occur . . . [doing critical ethnographic sociolinguistics] means identifying what resources are circulating, what resources people are competing for, as well as the conditions that make them available and valuable; it means figuring out how their distribution is organized and how it works, and how people position themselves with respect to them; and it means figuring out what the consequences of these processes are, for whom, in terms of who gets to control access to resources and who gets to assign their value (Heller, 2011: 39).

In assessing the material and social implications of issues concerning language, this field has placed much emphasis on “late capitalism”, a term seemingly used as a synonym for neoliberalism to describe the present phase of capitalism (Duchêne and Heller, 2012; Heller and McElhinney, 2017: 230-

1). The interplay between language and the economy is most typically demonstrated in the critical sociolinguistics literature through discussion of the ways in which linguistic resources are commodified (e.g. Heller and McElhinney, 2017; Pujolar, 2018) and the linguistic implications of increased population mobility under globalised modernity (e.g. Lorente, 2012). The work of Pujolar (e.g. 2000, 2018) on mobility and tourism, primarily in the Catalan context, has particular resonance for the discussions in section 5.4 and 5.5 below which explore local inflections of these matters in the Gaeltacht context in recent years. While only tangentially relevant to the topic of this thesis, work such as the volume edited by Duchêne, Moyer and Roberts (2013) addresses important questions around the reproduction of social inequality amongst migrants in the workplace via the regimentation of linguistic capital.

It is of note, however, that despite being keenly aware of many of the macro-level forces that this study attempts to interrogate, work done under the rubric of critical sociolinguistics has to date had little to say about how these processes drive language minoritisation. This is a significant deficit in a field that claims to see issues of social justice and power inequities as being of central concern (Heller and McElhinny, 2017).

## **2.8 Ethnographies of Ireland – a review of anthropological literature**

Having examined much of the key literature relating to the language and economics aspect of this study, some important works on the study of life in rural Ireland will now be discussed. I will look at anthropological and sociological works which applied an ethnographic approach to data collection, as they provide an important methodological background to this present work.

With the earliest works pertaining to Ireland that can be broadly classified as ethnographies dating back as far as the late 1800s, ethnography in Ireland has a considerable pedigree. Indeed, Ireland was one of the first sites in the world in which anthropology was conducted (Wilson and Donnan, 2006: 1). Similar to early anthropology in other areas of the then-colonised world, however, it is

now clear that such research was culpable of some deeply problematic practices. Studies by Haddon and Browne which took place in Oileáin Árann and south-west Conamara (which remain to this day some of the strongest Gaeltacht areas) offered an contentious assessment of the inhabitants, presented in racist terms and complete with the use of craniometers and efforts to record “indices of negrescence” (Haddon and Browne 1892; Browne, 1898; Browne, 1900; see also Egan and Murphy, 2015: 135). Such early work in Irish anthropology often expressed a romanticism that yearned for an idyllic, pre-industrial rural culture that was soon “destined to pass” – an ideology also key to inspiring much of the early language revitalisation movement (see 1.2).

The 1930s saw the *Harvard Irish Study* funding several studies in the “most Irish part of Ireland” – the rural west. This research largely continued the romanticist approach of earlier studies but produced important publications such as Arensberg and Kimball’s examination of a village in west Clare, one of the earliest “modern” ethnographic studies of a rural Irish community (1968 [1940]). Despite remaining influential until the 1980s, their study is laden with much of the problematic rhetoric typical of early anthropology (Egan and Murphy, 2015). While they did break new ground in conducting long-term ethnographic work in rural Ireland, they also controversially contended that their study was one of a homogenous rural lifestyle which was all but identical across the whole of the island. In claiming that their conclusions could therefore be unproblematically extrapolated to give a picture of all of rural Ireland, they fell into a classic pitfall of essentialist thinking.

After a period which saw anthropologists taking the work of Arensberg and Kimball as canonical, with anthropological studies primarily attempting to “prove or disprove” their findings (Wilson and Donnan, 2006: 21), several important ethnographies were published in the 1970s. Attempting to address the anomalously high rates of schizophrenia in the area, Scheper-Hughes’ famous *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* (1979) examined life in a Gaeltacht community in Co. Kerry. Addressing the repressive role of Catholicism, unemployment and emigration, and with echoes of the *fin de*

*siècle* fatalism that characterised earlier anthropologies of Ireland, Scheper-Hughes painted a view of a community and way of life that was “pathological” and “in decline”. Such characterisations of perceived dysfunctionality did little to endear her to her host community, who shunned her on return visits (Egan and Murphy, 2015: 138). Despite espousing what is now a contentious viewpoint, similar attitudes are echoed in the works of Scheper-Hughes peers’ who were working on the anthropology of Ireland concomitantly.

One example of a work that adopted a perhaps similarly dated approach to Irish ethnography – but one of several possible examples of the so-called “literature of decline” – is Brody’s *Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland* (1974). Similar to Scheper-Hughes, Brody was a foreign academic entering the culture from the outside and depicting rural Irish life, as the book’s subtitle suggests, as being in a state of decrepitude. The work shares many key themes with Scheper-Hughes, with the introduction telling us “it is the breakdown of the communities, the devaluation of the traditional mores, the weakening hold of the older conceptions over the minds of young people” (1973: 2) which provides the central focus of the book.

Basing his research in two remote parishes – one in Co. Clare and the other in Co. Cork – Brody characterises their populations as being fundamentally “demoralized” (1974: 16), seemingly powerless as they watch their communities destroyed by emigration and poverty. With the increased ease of communication that came with the rural electrification scheme of the 1940s, accounts of newfound prosperity flooded back from friends and families who had emigrated to Britain or America. No longer satisfied with the isolation of rural Ireland, people’s conceptions of success expanded in accordance with the reports they heard from foreign metropolises, with many thus left unwilling to remain in their home communities (1974: 15). It is this change in attitudes which allegedly condemned what was seen as typical rural Irish culture to a protracted death. The ensuing demoralization led people to actively turn against their locality and to largely reject the reproduction of their heritage culture in a way that, Brody claims, not even the Great Hunger had caused.

Brody is undoubtedly most effective in situating these trends in a wider discussion about the effects of Ireland's neo-colonial positioning and the fraught nature of a rural peasantry confronted with industrial capitalism (1974: 10, 15). As with other works mentioned above, however, developments in anthropology over recent decades leave his work appearing somewhat dated, showing tinges of the exoticism that characterised anthropology as it was conducted in decades past. Like his predecessors Arensberg and Kimball, Brody adopts what has been termed a "homogenising narrative" (Egan and Murphy, 2015: 134) in contending that his findings in Inishkillane could be unreflexively extrapolated to all of rural Ireland.

Anthropological literature on Ireland in the 1980s saw the emergence of works critiquing studies such as *Inishkillane* and *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics*, contesting the claims of cultural uniformity that marked these and other early ethnographic works. Authors such as Kane (1986) questioned the validity of describing all Irish rurality as "pathological" and challenged the stereotypes which works such *Inishkillane*, with its narrative of decay and decline, promulgated.

As part of this turn in Irish anthropology and sociology, a new kind of ethnography emerged, one which was cognisant of the discipline's spectres, of the racialized exoticisms and homogenising tendencies of its forbearers (Egan and Murphy, 2015: 136). Work such as Peace's (2001) ethnography of a Co. Clare village – notably the same county that Brody set much of *Inishkillane* in – offer a unique insight into the daily life of a rural community as they approached the turn of the millennium, one which explicitly rejected the assumed typicality common in earlier works.

Ó Laoire's study of the musical traditions of Oileán Thoraí follows in a similar vein. In contrast with an era when anthropology in Ireland was overwhelmingly done by foreign academics, Ó Laoire is a native of the mainland parish that overlooks Toraigh in the Donegal Gaeltacht. Furthermore, his study was originally written in Irish with the English version published three years later (2002; 2005), an assertion of belonging, and, perhaps, an attempt at

maintaining a rapport with his informants, all native Irish speakers themselves. Ó Laoire is expressly conscious of the historically uneasy relationship with methodological ethics that anthropology has had, not least its tendency to gloss over or deny power inequities. He thus adopts what he terms a “dialogic anthropology” – a model which seeks to “equalise the field” (2002: 21, my translation). This approach is notable for viewing informants and key actors as more than mere repositories to be mined for information, but rather as “co-researchers” in the ethnographic project who are just as important to the formation of knowledge as the ethnographer themselves.

While the primary focus of Ó Laoire’s work is the transmission of song in Toraigh’s oral culture, he devotes significant space to discussions of the social practice and behaviours of the island’s community (2002: 46). Adopting the post-modernist model of culture that has come into vogue in anthropology in recent years, he bases his methodology on a reflexive approach to ethnography. This approach challenges the ethnographer to examine and deconstruct many of their own preconceptions and beliefs which may otherwise colour their interpretation of the field and their analysis of the data they collect (2002: 43-4).

While there is no such thing as a truly “unbiased” researcher, as Fairclough (2001: 4) reminds us, such an approach nonetheless promotes a worthwhile attempt at producing a more objective and representative form of ethnography, an instructive example which I aim to emulate (see 3.2). In adopting such an approach, Ó Laoire follows the “reflexive turn” that came to the fore in anthropology in the 1980s and saw “meditations of the conditions of an ethnography’s production become prerequisite” (Marcus, 2009: 1), adding an important ethical dimension and helping anthropology move further from its troubled roots.

In their recent discussion of “anthropological ancestors” and of a modernizing discipline which strives to lose the shackles of this difficult past, Egan and Murphy offer an engaging narrative “of how a distinct contemporary anthropology of Ireland is coming into being” (2015: 139). Their work

challenges the discipline of anthropology in Ireland to “exorcise” the various ghosts that continue to cast their shadow over the field and, following Curtin et al. (1993: 13), be responsive to the high levels of reflexivity and cosmopolitanism which characterise late modernity in Irish society. Significantly for this thesis, their calls for such a reimagined approach appeal for researchers to treat the anthropology of Ireland as an anthropology of globalisation, reflecting Ireland’s status as a society wholly integrated into the global neoliberal infrastructure. They reference many examples of modern ethnographies that serve to illustrate the diversity of topics examined by recent ethnographic studies in Ireland. Notably, however, there is no reference to language anywhere amongst these examples. They nonetheless provide some valuable comments about the future direction of ethnography in Ireland and leave the way open for much positive innovation.

## **2.9 Developing a sociolinguistic ethnography of language and economics in the Gaeltacht**

As has been shown, ethnography in the Gaeltacht has a long history, with the earliest ethnographies of Ireland taking place in the Galway Gaeltacht. The west of Ireland in general appealed to early anthropologists, being seen in romanticist terms as a fringe of the fringe, a last bastion of Celticism and untarnished pre-industrial culture, and it was therefore suitably exoticised in early studies. As the previous section described, numerous important ethnographies have also been located in the Gaeltacht in more recent decades.

For all this ethnographic focus on the Gaeltacht, it is notable that there have been very few in-depth ethnographies which explicitly focus on what is surely these regions’ most unique feature, the continued use of Irish as a vernacular. Despite comments on the poverty and underdevelopment of rural Ireland being commonplace in the literature, little academic effort was made to examine the links between this underdevelopment and language maintenance/shift. While there have been some ethnographic works that address various aspects of the language, with the exception of Ní Dhúda (2017, 2018) and Walsh’s work

which made use of ethnographic-style interviews in the Gaeltacht (2011a), these have focused on language outside the Gaeltacht. Mac Ionnrachtaigh's account of Republican prisoners learning Irish while interned in Belfast's H-blocks in the 1980s, for instance, used ethnographic interviews to explore this remarkable period (Mac Ionnrachtaigh, 2013). Similarly, Zenker (2013) used ethnography to explore language revival efforts in the North of Ireland more generally. Although Irish ethnographies no longer confine themselves to the rural west, instead offering a rich diversity of studies on gender, sexuality, crime, secularization, sports and more, all but no ethnographic work has been published that looks at Irish in its remaining heartlands, rendering the Gaeltacht a "zone of cultural invisibility" (Egan and Murphy, 2015: 137) in ethnographic terms.

While valuable work has been done on Gaeltacht development, studies such as those discussed in this chapter have typically not adopted an ethnographic approach to their work and have therefore neglected an important epistemological approach which can offer unique insights on the sociolinguistic vitality of such communities. The remaining corpus of sociolinguistic literature pertaining to the Gaeltacht that has been published in recent years is very linguistically focused, leaving a gap in addressing the sociological context in which the Irish language continues to be transmitted, however tenuously.

It is with this deficit in mind that this thesis attempts to combine the sociolinguistic and economic study of language shift with ethnographic methods in attempting to answer the research questions detailed in 1.1.2. Further to contributing to our understanding of language shift under economic imperatives, by adopting such an ethnographic approach I hope to be able to answer Egan and Murphy's recent call for the application of a modern ethnographic imagination to one of the "multiple Irelands" (2015: 138), and offer an analysis that moves beyond the simplistic, homogenising interpretations that the Gaeltacht has suffered from in the past.



## 2.10 Conclusion

In providing the theoretical background to this study's findings, this review chapter has attempted to foreground several interconnected areas which have received very little attention in academic work published to date.

Despite the frequency with which sociolinguistic literature notes the importance of economic forces in driving language shift, there are clearly still significant deficits in our understanding of how this process plays out in practical terms (see 1.1). While academic commentators in Ireland have published a great volume of valuable material on all manner of language revitalisation-related topics over the last 130 years, it is nonetheless notable that there has been relatively little academic investigation into how the country's – and particularly the Gaeltacht's – often precarious economic situation has contributed to language shift in this context.

Furthermore, the dramatic economic transformations that have occurred on both national and international scales, primarily the growth of neoliberalism as a global hegemony, have received only limited attention in discussions of LPP in either Ireland or elsewhere. Although there is a large volume of research in the fields of political economy, public policy and sociology discussing the egregious effects of the austerity measures adopted since the great crash of neoliberalism in 2008, none of this international literature has addressed language use. LPP scholarship has also been similarly silent on the consequences of austerity measures for language vitality.

While the west of Ireland (and indeed, the Gaeltacht itself) was one of the earliest sites of ethnographic research, anthropological work in such areas primarily addressed issues not related to language, including migration, mental illness, marriage patterns and so on. Somewhat surprisingly, there has been very little work in the Gaeltacht explicitly addressing the question of language use and loss through an ethnographic lens, with most recent literature in this field adopting an overtly quantitative approach.

Having identified the various gaps in relevant academic work conducted to date, this thesis will endeavour to address some of these deficiencies, examining how the economic disruptions that occurred between 2008-18 affected covert and overt language policy and language maintenance in the Gaeltacht. The following chapter details the methodological approach adopted in order to complete this task of developing a “Gaeltacht sociolinguistic ethnography of language and economics”, with analysis of recent policy developments and ethnographic findings being presented in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction – my personal background in the Gaeltacht**

As someone who learned Irish to a high level of competence as a young adult, I was most fortunate to be able to do so through receiving significant linguistic input both inside and outside of an institutional context. Before beginning this doctorate, I spent over three years living as a lodger in the Galway Gaeltacht. Situated on the eastern bank of Loch Corrib, the area, Mionloch, is one of two weak Gaeltacht areas bordering the city, but, unlike Cnoc na Cathrach to the west, it is separated both geographically, and, indeed, linguistically (although dialect differences are comparatively slight) from the main Galway Gaeltacht in Conamara.

During this period I was fortunate enough to live with a middle-aged native Irish speaker who has an above-average interest in the language and who frequently attends cultural events in different Gaeltacht areas throughout the country, maintaining close friendships with people in Donegal and Conamara in particular. Throughout my stay in Mionloch I was therefore most fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to various areas of the Gaeltacht and to be introduced to many native Irish speakers, with my landlord acting as a “gatekeeper” and “sponsor” in social situations which would have been otherwise impossible for a learner to access (Bryman, 2008: 407). This repository of varied social connections was of great importance during the course of data collection and in securing access to target groups for the purposes of researching this PhD.

While living in Mionloch I also spent a year doing a master’s degree in language planning with *Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge*, the division of the National University of Ireland, Galway which runs third-level courses through the medium of Irish. In comparison with other third-level institutions in Ireland, the Acadamh has a very high proportion of students who were raised in the Gaeltacht as native Irish speakers (Walsh, 2014a: 309-11). This gave

me a further opportunity to become acquainted with people from the Gaeltacht and I maintain many of these friendships to this day, including with people who have gone on to work in significant Gaeltacht institutions such as ÚnaG or in the Acadamh itself. During the course of this study several of these individuals served as “key informants”, people who helped with issues of access and clarification when needed (Bryman, 2008: 409).

My involvement with language activism on a grassroots level as part of various university societies and civil society campaign groups both prior to and during this study has also provided me with opportunities to interact with many individuals active in language promotion efforts in the Gaeltacht. It also gave me occasion to work with various other “community leaders”, people involved in local politics in the Gaeltacht, Irish-language media personalities, etc. – experience which provided me with a further insight and a certain level of understanding of the communities that are the focus of this study.

Although being competent in the Irish language itself is of obvious importance for a project such as this, relevant skills by themselves, as Crang and Cook caution, are far from a guarantee of being accepted as an “insider”. This, however, is not necessarily wholly negative, allowing for a certain distance to be maintained which can be conducive to academic analysis (Crang and Cook, 2007: 48). While certainly not giving me the in-depth understanding of a Gaeltacht native, these years of experience nevertheless greatly facilitated my research, making it far easier for me to recruit informants, understand contexts, and, hopefully, interpret data with a greater degree of insight than would otherwise have been the case. As McCarty reminds us, “sometimes the best research context is not far away or “exotic,” but is one we already know something about” (2015: 84).

### **3.2 Methodological overview**

This study adopted an ethnographic approach to data collection. While not having been traditionally favoured in LPP research, as Hult and Cassels Johnson point out, the use of ethnography has become increasingly popular

in the last two decades (2015: 1), being ever more widely accepted since the first full-length LPP ethnography was published in 1988 (Hornberger, 1988). Commenting on this trend, Blommaert has referred to LPP ethnographies as “chronicles of complexity” and espoused their usefulness in analysing what are often complex and contested socio-cultural grounds (Blommaert, 2013). McCarty (2011) has edited an important collection of works on the ethnography of LPP, and Tusting and Maybin have noted this approach’s suitability for demonstrating links between different sociological levels “in the contexts of late modernity and globalisation” (2007: 576).

In contrast to the approach once favoured by anthropologists, current understandings of ethnography no longer see this methodology solely as an exercise in participant observation. It is now appreciated that the analysis of other relevant data, such as texts (in my case language plans, policy documents, etc.) and quantitative data can greatly contribute to the “thickness” of an ethnography (Bryman, 2008: 402). In line with such trends towards adopting an “expansive” approach to ethnographic production, much use was made in this study of already available data in order to elaborate on the findings of my ethnographic work and help prevent this study from falling into “anecdotalism” (Bryman, 2008: 599).

Through adopting such a methodology, an attempt has been made to present a comprehensive picture of the effects of the recession on the Gaeltacht. Information obtained from existing sociolinguistic literature on the Gaeltacht was used to not only inform my line of questioning and the direction of my research, but also, wherever possible, to support or refute claims made by informants in the field. The epistemological triangulation offered by such a mixed methods approach has been widely adopted in the social sciences in recent years, with the well-rounded nature of research conducted in this manner being increasingly appreciated, leading researchers to become ever more committed to such “methodological pluralism” (McCarty, 2015: 30). As Creswell states:

[m]ixed methods has come of age. To include only quantitative or qualitative methods falls short of the major approaches being used today in the social and human sciences . . . The situation today is less quantitative versus qualitative and more how research practices lie somewhere on a continuum between the two (Creswell, 2003: 4; see also Bernard, 2011: 267).

Reflecting on this move towards “interface ethnography”, Ortner notes that

anthropological work has been moving in this direction for some time now . . . The move toward multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus, 1998), the use of archives (e.g. Dirks, 1992), or in any event a deeper engagement with history (e.g. Ortner, 1999), the greater reliance on interviews (e.g. Ortner, 2003), the use of texts of every kind as both sources of information and embodiments of deeper meanings (starting with Geertz, 1973) – all of these have been expanding the anthropological toolkit in extremely valuable ways (Ortner, 2010: 219).

In their call to “slice the [LPP] onion ethnographically”, Hornberger and Cassels Johnson (2007), prominent authors in the burgeoning field of the ethnography of LPP, also advocate such a broad-based approach to LPP ethnographies.

Presenting both policy analysis (Chapter 4) and ethnographic findings buttressed with reference to extant quantitative material (Chapter 5), this study accords with this innovative approach. It is hoped that in doing so it presents the most complete and accurate representation of the subject matter attainable in a project of this scale.

Further to adopting this methodology, I have aspired to use what Lin, drawing on Habermas, refers to as the “critical research paradigm” (2015: 21). This approach calls on researchers to be aware of, articulate and challenge how their own personal backgrounds and the ideological assumptions of their discipline influence their interpretation of data and creation of knowledge. It requires not only reflexivity around issues of researcher positionality, but also regarding how research will affect those who are being researched. The critical research paradigm asks how ethical research can best be done in an unjust world in order to empower subordinated groups and inhibit the reproduction of dominating institutions or practices. The adoption of such a stance has been seen as “very important if LPP research is to contribute to promoting social

justice and challenging unequal relations of power often found in LPP contexts” (Lin, 2015: 30). It is hoped that the use of such an approach helps ensure that while there may be inherent biases in the research, that they are duly acknowledged and addressed as is required by an ethical approach to ethnography (Ó Laoire, 2003).

### **3.2.1 Ethnographic Research**

As explained above, the majority of data for this study were collected through ethnographic research in the Gaeltacht. With this project aiming to gain a detailed understanding of how macro-level processes of economic disruption play out at meso- and micro-levels, it was important that my research methodology allowed me to conceptualise the research subject in the most holistic terms possible. As Gille and O’Riain (2002) and Nic Craith and Hill (2015) have observed, the ethnographic method is a most efficacious way to gather data aimed at examining the destabilization and disembedding of social relations under globalisation, and as such it offered a suitable way for me to address my research questions. Furthermore, with much of the most important research done on language shift in the Gaeltacht in recent years being of a quantitative nature (Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007a; Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a), ethnography allows for the filling of a significant gap in extant literature.

The validity of the ethnographic method can certainly be challenged on various grounds – primarily pertaining to a perceived subjectivity and a lack of the scientific rigour that allegedly characterises some other epistemologies. As Crang and Cook have pointed out, however, such “scientism” arises from a misunderstanding of the reality of how the “hard scientific” method is actually applied in reality (2007: 8-15). These same authors offer several recommendations, which I elaborate on below, for allowing the ethnographer to move from a “mere subjectivity” to a “rigorous objectivity” by ensuring the correct use of purposive sampling, obtaining “saturation”, adopting a theoretically adequate framework of analysis and rooting such practices in an in-depth understanding of relevant literature (2007: 15). Ultimately, however, it must be conceded that a certain measure of subjectivity is unavoidable in the



social sciences. Even though we should always apply methods that promote objectivity and neutrality, we must accept that “regardless of the research methods we select from our toolkit, in the end, all social science research is always interpretive” (Hult and Cassels Johnson, 2015: xii).

In undertaking this ethnographic study I drew on my previous period of intense cultural immersion and the network of contacts that I have built up over the years as a pool from which to locate informants. Having been fortunate enough to have already visited strongly Irish-speaking, “category A” Gaeltacht areas (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007b: 13) on many occasions, I had a reasonable understanding of the social terrain I intended to traverse. Nonetheless, as ethnographers inevitably are, I was ultimately reliant on acquaintances who acted as gatekeepers, facilitating access and offering guidance as required. The existence of such gatekeepers helped in developing an emic perspective and avoiding the “simplistic inductivism” of believing it is sufficient to merely “hang out” in a community, without any form of facilitation, direction or guidance (Silverman, 2000: 60-2).

These “key informants” (Bryman, 2008: 409) were mostly people who I knew from my time living in the Gaeltacht and being a student of the Acadamh and were typically involved in community development projects of various types. Further to being “local power brokers” (Fetterman, 1989: 12), they were mostly individuals who had previously shown an interest in my research and expressed a desire to assist me where possible. Making the most of such generosity, I was able to gain access to situations which would likely otherwise be out of bounds for a researcher (Bryman, 2008: 407-8).

Such “meta-informants” and various other existing contacts of mine were used to draw up a list of potential interviewees. Working with these individuals, I employed the “snowball”, friend-of-a-friend method to recruit further informants who were not previously known to me. Similar to Ó hlfearnáin (2013: 353), at the end of each interview, interviewees were asked if they could recommend anyone else in their area who might be interested in talking to me about the same sort of issues.

As is typical for ethnography, rather than attempting to obtain a totally random or proportional sample, I applied a process of “judgemental sampling” (Fetterman, 1989: 43), also known as “purposeful” or “theoretical sampling” (Crang and Cook, 2007: 12). This approach relies on the judgment of the ethnographer to ensure the appropriateness of a sample and attempts to capitalise on “natural opportunities, convenience and also luck” (Crang and Cook, 2007: 12), rather than making pretensions to total randomness. Unlike pure convenience sampling (where a sample is studied simply because it happens to be available to the researcher), judgemental sampling is conducted with specific goals in mind, allowing the researcher to follow up on certain cohorts or individuals who are particularly pertinent to the research project (Bryman, 2008: 415). This method seeks to confirm the relevance of informants to the target information and thus ensures that those most capable of providing useful and valid data are not lost to the randomness that defines many other sampling methods (Bryman, 2008: 415).

Key to the effective use of purposeful sampling for a project such as this, of course, is ensuring that a wide variety of informants of different backgrounds with widely varying roles in the community are sought out. An effort was therefore made to include not only well-known and vocal “community leaders” amongst my interviewees, but also the less outspoken but equally relevant individuals who make up the bulk of any community (Crang and Cook, 2007: 18). While this does not totally nullify sampling bias, it is hoped that my efforts in this regard obtained a representative range of community opinions, thereby adding to the validity of the data.

As this methodology adopts a non-probability sample, however, it is understood that the findings it produces cannot immediately be generalised to the whole population. As with Hornberger’s pioneering LPP ethnography in Peruvian schools (1988), or Jaffe’s work on Corsica (1999), it is nonetheless hoped that there is still be a certain amount of transferability to other cases in the patterns observed. In order to help ensure this is the case, it was

paramount that I took steps to ensure my ethnography is sufficiently thick, for, as Hult and Cassels Johnson observe:

[v]ariability across contexts is taken for granted, but if the ethnographer provides enough rich and detailed description and analysis of one local context, it should be possible for the reader familiar with another local context to sort out what findings might or might not transfer. In that regard, the greater the particularity of description and interpretation, the more likely it is that a reader will be able to determine whether these particular findings apply to another context . . . The transferability and generalizability of these authors' ethnographies lie, not perhaps in the representativeness or randomness of their cases, but in their providing particular, "thickly described" accounts informed by and contributing to the wider research literature on processes of minoritization – and revitalization (Hult and Cassels Johnson, 2015: 17).

### **3.2.1.1 Data collection procedures**

In total, over eight months were spent conducting fieldwork in the Gaeltacht for this project. It has been traditionally understood that at least six months is required for a full-scale ethnographic study, more where possible (Fetterman, 1989: 18; Ó Laoire, 2005: 40), with this study thereby exceeding this threshold. The main periods of fieldwork undertaken were during the summers of 2015 and 2016, when I was free from teaching duties in the university. In addition to these periods, I was also able to spend time at different parts of the year in the Gaeltacht during various holidays. As well as adding to my understanding of these communities during the "off season" when there were very few tourists around, these periods allowed me to follow up on specific points with informants who were interviewed during the summer, obtaining further comment or clarification as required. Much of the writing up of this thesis was also conducted while once again living in the Gaeltacht.

During my fieldwork I lived in communities in both Galway and Donegal. With the Donegal Gaeltacht being in a significantly more peripheral location than most of Galway, this provided an informative insight into the spatially differentiated consequences of the economic crisis. Although there are also Gaeltacht areas in Munster, an examination of this area was beyond the scope of this project. As Galway and Donegal contain the largest category A Gaeltacht areas in which over two thirds of the community speak Irish on a

daily basis (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a), it was felt that these would provide greater opportunities for answering my research questions. Furthermore, the southern and eastern parts of the country are significantly better off socio-economically than the north and west, which are categorised differently in European Union development typologies (Ó hAoláin, 2002: 31; Finn, 2002: 15).

Rather than attempting to be a totalising ethnographic monologue documenting the entirety of social life in these areas, my emphasis is confined to those aspects of Gaeltacht life impacted by the Great Recession. Consequently, I do not believe that conducting all my fieldwork in one community would have been helpful in mapping the terrain I wished to cover. I therefore divided my time between several areas that have historically seen significant economic interventions aimed at community and linguistic maintenance, staying in each area until I had achieved theoretical saturation and gathered the various narratives regarding the economic crisis that were practised in each community.

While the timeframe involved was sufficient to allow this work to be classed as an orthodox ethnography, and although the substantive focus of my research is relatively traditional – involving rural, often isolated communities in the west of Ireland notable for a unique linguistic trait – the multi-sited nature of my study sees it diverge from more orthodox ethnographies. Where ethnographers traditionally locate themselves in a single community, often with a relatively clear delineation of its boundaries, I did not focus on one single “bounded” community for the duration of my fieldwork, making this thesis more a work of comparative ethnography. My focusing on the category A Gaeltacht areas of both Galway and Donegal was partly a response to the varied locations of my existing contacts, no significant majority of which were located in any one area, but also in deference to Marcus’ (1998) contention that the study of an increasingly globalised world is best accomplished through the use of multisited ethnography. Such an approach allowed for a wider view of the interplay between language and neoliberal economics than would have been

obtained by focusing solely on one community, with the comparison between the two main Gaeltacht areas of Galway and Donegal producing worthwhile and informative comparative data.

During my fieldwork I adopted the typical ethnographic approach of engaging in “informal interviews” where the opportunity arrived (Fetterman, 1989: 49). These unrecorded “interviews” – in effect day to day, informal interactions – supported the recorded interviews which served as my primary data point, and hopefully provided the more in-depth understanding of issues which is best obtained through observing the banality of informal, day to day life. As is well documented in sociology and anthropology, such participant observation is key to achieving an emic view and ethnographic thickness sufficient to provide a worthwhile body of data to be used in later analysis (Geertz, 1973; 1988; Fetterman, 1989: 114).

As is standard practice in ethnography, regular field notes – “the heart of the ethnographic enterprise” (McCarty, 2015: 85) – were kept throughout the course of my fieldwork. These notes detailed events that were telling in regard to the social, economic and/or linguistic vitality of these areas. The settings they occurred in, age groups involved, verbatim quotes, etc. were all recorded in as much detail as possible. Following recommendations by Bryman (2008: 417-9), these notes were initially taken in a pocket notebook or on a Dictaphone as soon as possible after the event and later transferred to an electronic research diary. This material allowed for later analysis of events and proved a valuable reference point when writing up my findings.

Typical of ethnographic work of this nature, participant observation notes were augmented through detailed semi-structured interviews conducted with informants recruited via the “snowballing” method described above. I conducted 52 interviews, after which I had clearly achieved theoretical saturation, having heard the dominant discourses relating to the recession that are prevalent in the Gaeltacht repeated many times. Furthermore, detailed interviewing of a larger sample than this would simply not have been feasible for a project of this scale. These interviews were later transcribed, providing a

corpus of some 375,000 words which were coded and analysed once fieldwork was completed.

While attempting to balance the representation of dialectal features with standard conventions for writing Irish, interviews were transcribed to give as accurate a reflection as possible of what interviewees said, non-standard grammatical features and profanities included. As such, the interview extracts used throughout the thesis often include instances of words not being mutated as standard usage would expect. Furthermore, irregular verbs are often regularised or other non-standard conjugations used, and there is a large amount of code-mixing and outright switching to English, as is typical of colloquial Gaeltacht speech (Ní Ghearáin, 2018). All such features were transcribed as uttered, with non-standard spellings being used to convey dialectal pronunciation where deemed appropriate, broadly following the practices of Ó Curnáin (2007) and Ó Laoire (2002) regarding Galway and Donegal Irish respectively. As codeswitching was unmarked by my informants it has not been indicated in transcription. Unspaced ellipses (“...”) are used to indicate an unfinished statement, while spaced ellipses (“. . .”) denote that a section of the informant’s speech has been removed from the extract for reasons of brevity or clarity.

23 of my interviewees were from Galway and 26 from Donegal, with the remaining three being employees of language promotion bodies based in Dublin. Despite my best efforts to gain a more even gender mix, just fifteen of these informants were female. This is the result of several issues. Primarily, due to the patriarchal nature of Irish society, those involved in economic development and other areas of key importance to this thesis, including business owners, executives in development agencies, local politicians and community activists, are all much more likely to be male. Furthermore, females were unfortunately noticeably more reluctant to discuss their opinions on record, even when anonymity was ensured.

Sixteen informants were in the “young adult” category, aged 18-34. Six were employees of ÚnaG. Two were politicians (one local, one national). Two were

owners of large businesses which employed in excess of 30 people each. At least eleven were rearing children under the age of 18, many others had adult children. As is typical for the Gaeltacht, many of my informants worked in sectors that were dependent on state support. The gender imbalance notwithstanding, these 52 informants covered a wide range of social classes and backgrounds, with interviewees being chosen to ensure I spoke to people from a wide range of socioeconomic positions, including skilled and unskilled workers, as well as those who owned large businesses and the unemployed. The corpus of interviews these informants conducted with me therefore offered a suitable data set from which conclusions could be drawn to answer my research questions.

### **3.2.2 Analysis of existing policy documents and quantitative data**

As discussed above, in addition to my ethnographic data, a key part of this thesis, presented in Chapter 4, analyses language policy decisions made during the 2008-18 period. As well as providing an important insight into the effects of the economic crisis and the austerity measures that ensued, this analysis, along with existent quantitative data on the Gaeltacht, helped me to triangulate and corroborate much of the information I obtained through ethnographic means.

Fortunately for this study's purposes, in comparison with many other languages with a similarly-sized speech community, Irish has a vast amount of sociolinguistic literature pertaining to it, with much of this work focusing on the Gaeltacht. Furthermore, Irish has a significant amount of legal and institutional provision. This support extends to the legal delineation of the Gaeltacht as an area with a unique linguistic heritage and which has been privileged with institutional and financial supports not available to areas of similar socioeconomic standing outside its borders. As this involves state provision, there is a large amount of pertinent documentation and legislation surrounding these policies which was most amenable to analysis for this study.

Government budgets and memoranda post-2008, for instance, were very instructive in the way they have addressed issues of funding for the Gaeltacht. While public spending in almost all sectors was reduced post-2008, Chapter 4 compares cuts to funding for Gaeltacht-based institutions with similar non-Gaeltacht bodies, clearly demonstrating the disproportionate nature of the cuts received by Gaeltacht institutions. The analysis of such differential rates of budgetary contraction comprises a key part of this thesis' argument in relation to neoliberalism's antipathy towards language revitalisation efforts and accords with many of the ethnographic findings presented in Chapter 5.

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, academic literature on the Gaeltacht includes several important studies that are of great relevance to this thesis. One that was particularly useful in helping identify suitable fieldwork sites was the CLS (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a). This study primarily used census data to provide a detailed analysis of the relative strength of the Irish language in the 155 electoral divisions that comprise the official Gaeltacht. In 2015 an update to this study was released, using census data from 2011, at the height of the recession (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a), allowing for an informative comparison of the Gaeltacht pre- and post-crash.

In a typology somewhat reminiscent of the *fíor/breac*-Gaeltacht distinction proposed in 1926 (see 1.3), the CLS categorised Gaeltacht areas based on the self-reported percentage of daily users outside of the education system. It concluded that language shift is effectively complete in 75% of the official Gaeltacht, and was actively taking place in another 9% – areas respectively termed categories C and B (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007b: 13). Referring to these findings allowed me to focus my research in particular on those areas of the Gaeltacht in Galway and Donegal in which over two-thirds of the population use Irish daily outside the education system (category A areas), as noted above. The availability of this quantitative data was of great importance, as the recession could only have a small impact on language maintenance in areas where Irish has already ceased to be transmitted intergenerationally and is now spoken only by the elderly.



As well as works such as the CLS and other sociolinguistic research pertaining to the Gaeltacht, the detailed information pertaining to language use, employment, migration and so on that is available in the records of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) was also immensely useful. This provided a quantitative overview of the demography of specific Gaeltacht areas, allowing me to explore, for instance, migration patterns to and from the Gaeltacht, employment and labour force participation rates, commuting patterns, rates of educational attainment and other markers of socioeconomic prosperity or deprivation. Relevant CSO data are presented at the beginning of Chapter 5 to help contextualise the ethnographic findings which make up the bulk of the chapter, offering a diachronic overview of economic and social change in the Gaeltacht before, during and after the Great Recession. Such data is also used where appropriate to make synchronic comparisons between stronger and weaker parts of the Gaeltacht, thus permitting an exploration of the differential impact of the crisis on the most geographically remote areas.

### **3.3 Ethics**

As Ó Laoire (2003: 113) has described, in recent decades the field of ethnography has been increasingly problematized and many of its basic assumptions challenged. What was once seen as a relatively straightforward approach to knowledge creation through which cultures, heritage objects and life stories were collected and catalogued is now understood as a fraught territory replete with asymmetric power relationships and ethical quandaries. As explored in 2.8, the history of ethnography in Ireland is one which has been culpable of what are now understood as highly problematic methodologies, with anthropologists still struggling to shake off the legacy of the discipline's dark past and colonialist associations.

Conscious of this legacy and acknowledging the tendentious nature of both the "field" and "informants" (both problematic concepts in themselves – see Fetterman, 1989: 58; Ó Laoire, 2003: 122-3), this project accorded every due attention to ethical matters.

As part of my critical ethnographic approach, I adopted the notion of ethics being something you *do*, rather than as merely an approval to be gained at a study's outset and then promptly forgotten about (Canagarajah and Stanley, 2015: 35). This approach is part of a larger critical turn in social science scholarship, whereby researchers are required to be aware of their own ideological positions, and how these may run contrary to those of their informants:

[w]hile the positivistic tradition adopted the stance of objectivity, neutrality, and disinterestedness, the critical tradition engages with issues of power inequality, value differences, and subject positions as they influence the representation of knowledge, researchers, and participants (Canagarajah and Stanley, 2015: 35).

Being an individual with a deep personal interest in language revitalisation – which I understand as part of my commitment to a broader politics of decolonisation and libertarian socialism – my ideological positioning is undoubtedly divergent from many of those I encountered in the field, a fact which I remained aware of throughout my research in order to ensure it did not unduly colour my work or impact on the rigours of best academic practice.

As my study is of a relatively uncontroversial nature and involved only consenting adults, level one clearance was obtained in accordance with the ethical guidelines for PhD students laid out by the School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh. Furthermore, following protocol laid out by the School and a custom that is acknowledged in the field as best practice (ESRC, 2015: 29), all interviewees were asked to read and sign a consent form before the interviews began. Only those capable of making such an informed decision were involved in the research. This document was available in either Irish or English and explained the broad focus of the study, what participation would involve and informed them what use would be made of the data they supplied. It also offered my personal contact details and those of the university and the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies should participants have wished to query any aspect of the study at a later stage. As of the time of this thesis' submission, no such queries had been made.

In order to afford further protection to both myself as a researcher and also to those who participated in my study (who, as Fetterman reminds us, are ultimately those with the most at stake in any ethnography (1989: 136)), all personal names and the specifics of locations in my personal notes were anonymised. While a certain degree of geographical specificity is required by the nature of the study, this is given in as general a manner as is practical. The names of individuals, specific areas, businesses, etc. have all been anonymised or redacted in interview extracts cited throughout this work. In this manner I endeavoured to both lessen the “burden of authorship” on myself (Geertz, 1988) and assuage any worries participants may have had in taking part in this research.

As a further attempt to reduce the inequities of power inherent in the ethnographic encounter, interviewees were free to conduct the interview through Irish, English or a mixture of both, however they should see fit. Considering the now heavily bilingual make-up of the Gaeltacht and the decreasing domains in which the language is used (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a), I was aware that some speakers may be uncomfortable speaking entirely in Irish about subjects which require a register and vocabulary that they may not be very familiar with – the language of cutbacks, austerity, recession and so on.

As much recent research has shown, even in those communities which maintain a high percentage of daily speakers of Irish, someone’s age is frequently an indicator of their relative comfort and competence in using the language. The overwhelming majority of young people who are brought up through Irish in strong Gaeltacht areas are significantly more competent in English, especially when using registers of language other than those pertaining to the home and educational environments (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a; Péterváry et al., 2014). Conversely, there remains a significant percentage of older people in the Gaeltacht who are more comfortable speaking in Irish than English – a second language which for many of them was only learned in adulthood, often while working abroad (Ó hIfearnáin, 2009:

541; see also Ó Curnáin, 2012a for a typological description of likely speaker competencies based on which generation they belong to). While this study clearly focuses primarily on those inhabitants of the Gaeltacht who are active Irish speakers, participants were nonetheless assured that they were free to use whichever language they preferred during the interview. All but two interviews were ultimately conducted in Irish, although, as noted above, many were marked by a high-degree of codeswitching, as is commonplace in contemporary Gaeltacht speech. The remaining two informants, each of whom were learning Irish at the time of our interaction, did not feel sufficiently comfortable in their Irish-language ability to discuss the subject matter with me and as such opted for English.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

While still associated in the popular imagination with the image of a researcher going to a far-flung locale and being immersed in a culture totally foreign to them for a long period, contemporary approaches to ethnography have developed significantly since the days when such practices were first popularised. Indeed, the traditional divisions between quantitative and qualitative methodologies that were previously so fundamental in the social sciences have recently been breaking down, with good research now best understood as lying on a continuum between these two opposing poles.

Ethnographers nowadays make use of a wide variety of textual, visual and quantitative data, on the understanding that doing so can only help increase the “thickness” of any ethnographic study, greatly helping with the triangulation of research findings. Further destabilising traditional understandings of the ethnographic method, the use of multisited ethnography has come to be seen as an effective way to analyse the macro-micro sociological interface that is so fundamental to globalisation.

In a further departure from ethnography’s roots, author reflexivity has come to be seen as a prerequisite of the ethnographic method, as has the critical research paradigm with its call to ensure that ethics is something researchers

*do*, rather than merely being a box-ticking exercise designed to satisfy university authorities. It is thus unsurprising that an increasing number of authors in the field of LPP are seeing the advantages of such an expansive and progressive methodological approach as that adopted by contemporary ethnographers.

As has been described, this project will accord with this trend. The vast corpus of official documentation and budgetary decisions regarding Irish LPP published in recent years will be analysed in the following chapter. Both this and other pre-existing research will be used to help buttress the findings of the ethnographic data which follows in Chapter 5, allowing for connections between the macro-, meso- and micro levels of LPP and language shift to be demonstrated to a much greater degree than would be the case if this work was based solely on participant observation in a single Gaeltacht community.

## **4. Political and economic aspects of Irish-language policy, 2008-18**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The death of the Celtic Tiger described in section 2.4 had a significant impact on a wide range of public policy, including, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, language policy. Although there will be much focus on explicitly language-focused policies such as the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*, in attempting to afford due attention to the wider politico-economic context in which such policies operate, policies not specifically related to language which informed the state's response to the Great Recession will also be examined. As well as providing a key part of my analysis of how neoliberalism operates as "covert language policy" (Piller and Cho, 2013: 23) in the Gaeltacht context, this chapter serves to contextualise the ethnographic data presented in Chapter 5 which explores the micro-level consequences of these policies for Gaeltacht communities.

For reasons of brevity and in keeping with the overall focus of this thesis, I will look primarily at policies that have particular relevance for the Gaeltacht, but will also explore the rationalisation of the Irish language "voluntary sector" and the place of Irish in the public sector in general, an area which offers particular insight, I believe, into the influence of neoliberal thinking on language-related public policy.

As explained in 2.4, Ireland's policies over the last several decades have led it to become one of the most neoliberal countries in the world (Judt, 2010: 27-8), a process intensified in the wake of the 2008 crash. Developing on Ó Riagáin's observation that "[t]he various dimensions of Irish language policy have been heavily conditioned by the way the Irish economy and, in turn, Irish society has developed since independence" (1996: 36), it will be demonstrated that the extremes of neoliberal reform associated with the death of the Celtic Tiger led to an acceleration of state withdrawal from Irish-language maintenance efforts. I will argue that there is not only a correlative link here, but a causative one,

with neoliberal ideology militating against language revitalisation efforts. Adopting a term favoured in public policy studies, I will contend that developments in Irish LPP between 2008-18 amounted to a “punctuated equilibrium”, a sudden reform of a policy which had previously been changing only incrementally (Cairney, 2012: 172-99).

To demonstrate this, my discussion will focus initially on the report of *The Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes*, which was the main document that informed the state’s programme of austerity and restructuring after 2008 (McCarthy et al., 2009a, 2009b). Although this report effectively provided a road map for the reform of state language policy, it has to date received only very limited attention in academic literature on Irish and the Gaeltacht. I will then go on to provide “policy vignettes” (Cairney, 2012: 29) of “overt” language policies such as the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* and the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* that were introduced while the Irish economy was under the direction of the IMF-ECB-EC “Troika”. Following Shohamy’s important observation that a political entity’s language policy “should not be observed only through declared policy statements”, but also those policies unrelated to language that serve “to perpetuate language practices, often in covert and implicit ways” (Shohamy, 2006: xvi), a study of more covert aspects of recent Irish-language policy will then follow. This will include discussion of key developments such as the differential impact of the cuts on both ÚnaG and the state department with responsibility for the Gaeltacht, as well as the controversy surrounding the publication of the update to the *Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the Use of Irish in the Gaeltacht* in 2015 and cuts to Irish-language media funding.

I will then attempt, through an examination of the use of Irish in the public service and the neoliberal management structures that regulate this area, to provide a sociologically-informed structural account of the apparent antipathy of the public service towards the language. This chapter concludes with some further observations on neoliberalism’s operation as a structural force inhibiting effective language revitalisation.

Although the teaching of Irish as a compulsory subject in all schools is undoubtedly a major aspect of official language revitalisation policy, this is funded from the budget of the Department of Education and Skills and is not ordinarily understood as dedicated Irish-language spending. While austerity saw education budgets cut, these measures did not result in reductions in the level of provision for Irish. In response to a long campaign, a new Gaeltacht education policy was introduced in 2016. While space constraints unfortunately do not permit discussion of this development here, Ó Duibhir (2018) offers a detailed analysis of this new curriculum, which has been significantly under-resourced since its implementation (Tuairisc.ie, 2017a).

## **4.2 Language Policy developments post-2008**

A great deal has been written about the wider political implications of the crash and the significant upheavals it engendered for Irish society as a whole (e.g. Coulter and Nagle, 2014; Maher and O'Brien, 2014; Roche et al., 2017), but in terms of its influence on language policy a number of key points are worth mentioning. One must be the arrival of the IMF-ECB-EC Troika in December 2010, a development which entrenched the neoliberal character of the state's response to the crisis. To a large degree, however, they merely insisted on an approach the Irish elite were set on implementing regardless (see 4.2.10.1). Another point of note was the electoral defeat of the dominant Fianna Fáil party in the February 2011 election and their replacement with a Fine Gael-led government.

Having long since been understood as a party with limited sympathy for the language (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 169), Fine Gael's election manifesto in early 2011 – just two months after the launch of the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* – proposed the abolition of Irish as a compulsory subject for the Leaving Certificate. Although this plan was ultimately withdrawn due to widespread public opposition, the Fine Gael-Labour coalition of 2011-16 nonetheless presided over a period of significant disruption in language policy, although, notably, this amounted to a continuation of the policy trajectory adopted by the previous government in the wake of the crash. Despite often



being characterised as significantly more neoliberal than Fianna Fáil-Green coalition that governed up to 2011, as Murphy notes, the new coalition's policies did not differ significantly from their predecessors:

[w]ith the Troika MOU [memorandum of understanding] as a roadmap, the new government continued the path dependence that locks Ireland into the liberal model. While partisan politics had some impact, both crisis governments were dominated by centre to centre right parties and were largely consistent (Murphy, 2014: 140).

While far from an exhaustive account, the following sections discuss the most significant changes in Irish LPP, particularly with regard to the Gaeltacht, between 2008-18. In order to fully understand these developments, however, it is important to first examine the economic context from which such decisions emerged: as Lowi (1964) famously noted, too many assessments of policy focus on specific policy makers rather than the environment in which they operate. I will therefore begin with a discussion of the document that proposed the majority of austerity measures which were implemented post-2008. This and following sections will serve to illustrate how the Great Recession can be seen as having punctuated the generally incrementalist pattern of change that prevailed during the boom years and led to the adoption of a significantly more neoliberal language policy regime in the years since the crash.

#### **4.2.1 *An Bord Snip Nua: The Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes***

With its claim that “differential schemes aimed at Gaeltacht areas are not justifiable” (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 41) the *Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes* was unambiguous about its view of the approach the state should take towards the Gaeltacht as a result of the crisis. The report – which, along with the Troika's *Memorandum of Understanding* (IMF, 2010), was a key blueprint for the state's austerity policies – included drastic recommendations for cost savings relating to the Gaeltacht and a huge number of other areas financed by the public purse. As all the more language-specific policy developments discussed in later sections

of this chapter occurred under this report's influence, it is important that it be addressed firstly.

The Special Group was convened by finance minister Brian Lenihan in late 2008 and reported in July 2009. Known popularly as *An Bord Snip Nua* ("The New Snip Board") or the *McCarthy Report* after the group's chairman, Colm McCarthy, the report proposed €5.3 billion in cutbacks, including 17,300 public sector job cuts – a reduction of 5% in staffing numbers. While this seemed drastic at the time, these proposals would come to seem mild compared to the cuts of over €20 billion and the reduction of almost 10% in public servant numbers that ultimately occurred (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 149). As noted by Mercille and Murphy, McCarthy himself, an economist based in University College Dublin and a competent Irish speaker, "had previously recommended 'slash and burn' policies during the economic recession of the 1980s". He had been part of the original *Bord Snip* established in 1987 to address that decade's recession and has long since had a "reputation for espousing the virtues of *laissez-faire* economics and market discipline" (Mercille and Murphy, 2015: 133). Despite social partnership having been in place for almost two decades by 2009 (see 2.4), membership of the "special group" included no trade union or "third sector" voices, a decision which foreshadowed the state effectively ending social partnership unilaterally later that year.

Gaining impact and implementation that very few policy-focused academics ever achieve, McCarthy's proposals heavily influenced the 2010 budget, along with much of the emergency financial legislation that followed. Despite having such high-level impact, the recommendations of the board were deeply unpopular, with John McHale, professor of economics in the National University of Ireland, Galway, comparing them to the "shock therapy" applied after the collapse of the USSR (Indymedia.ie, 2009). While complete data on the implementation of the report's recommendations is difficult to obtain, some eleven months after the report's release the minister for finance reported that 145 of 271 recommendations had been implemented in full or in part (Dáil Éireann, 2010).

As noted, the report made proposals for a radical reform of state engagement with the Gaeltacht. It observed that the Department of Community, Regional and Gaeltacht Affairs' [DCRGA] seemingly very progressive remit was

to promote and support the sustainable and inclusive development of communities, both urban and rural, including Gaeltacht and island communities, thereby fostering better regional balance and alleviating disadvantage, and to advance the use of the Irish language (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 33).

Nonetheless, the report proceeded to recommend that the department “should be closed and its various functions either redistributed to other Government Departments, or discontinued as appropriate”, due to it having “a relatively lower priority in terms of the existing pressures on the public finances” (McCarthy et al., 2009a: 37). This would allow for a saving of some €151.1m, with it being proposed that those residual matters relating to the Irish language and culture which were not discontinued be assigned to the Department of Education and Science (McCarthy et al., 2009a: 37; 2009b: 36), and that DCRGA staff be laid off. While proposing an overall reduction of 9.4% in state expenditure, the functions performed by the DCRGA were to be cut at a significantly higher rate of 32%, the highest of any state department. Furthermore, within the DCRGA, the cuts recommended for Gaeltacht and islands expenditure amounted to 58% (Guth na Gaeltachta, 2010), a figure significantly higher than that recommended for any other subsector. Although the department was not ultimately closed, as will be seen in 4.2.5, it suffered severe cuts in a very short period which have not since been reversed.

Another suggestion with extremely significant implications for the Gaeltacht was the proposal to “[c]onsolidate all indigenous enterprise support and sector marketing functions in *Enterprise Ireland* . . . and rationalise the organisations losing functions as appropriate” (McCarthy et al., 2009a: 27). This was to include ÚnaG, thereby saving €6.9m (McCarthy et al., 2009a: 36), with the group noting “the high cost per job created” by ÚnaG as one of the reasons for its decision (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 42). Although the functions of ÚnaG would reportedly have been maintained under the aegis of Enterprise Ireland,

language groups insisted this approach was deeply unsuitable considering the unique needs of the Gaeltacht (Guth na Gaeltachta, 2010). As with the DCRGA, while ÚnaG was not closed – most probably due to such a proposal not being politically viable at the time – it suffered a massive reduction to its budget over a very short period, severely curtailing the organisation’s work (see 4.2.4). As described in the following extract from an interviewee employed in Irish-language advocacy, the retention of the DCRGA and ÚnaG was permitted only on condition of them losing the vast majority of their resources:

*M: [B]hí moladh má théann tú siar ag an moladh a bhí ag Colm McCarthy agus Bord Snip a dó, fáil réidh leis an roinn agus fáil réidh leis Údarás na Gaeltachta agus fáil réidh le y’know nach mór gach institiúid a bhain leis an nGaeilge. So bhí siad faoi bhrú, bhí siad faoi ionsaigh ach glacadh cinneadh iad a choinneáil agus Údarás a choinneáil agus eile ach tá sé ar nós gurb é sin an bronntanas – “seo daoibh, tá sibh in ann iad a choinneáil ach tá muid chun iad a scrios”.*

Other cuts proposed – and ultimately implemented – included the discontinuation of Gaeltacht-specific schemes such as the housing grant for Gaeltacht residents and the grant paid to parents of Irish-speaking children, *Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge*, both of which aimed “to incentivise inhabitants to remain in Gaeltacht areas” (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 41). The *Community and Recreational Schemes* which funded infrastructure such as community centres and sports pitches in Gaeltacht areas and the *Gaeltacht Improvement Schemes* which aided physical and economic development were also abolished.

*An Bord Snip’s* proposals to discontinue *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge* (“Irish-learners’ scheme”, see 5.4.3.1) and close COGG (a policy and promotion agency focused on Irish-medium education) were successfully resisted, however. The proposal to abolish *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge* in particular, which provides a subvention for those who host attendees at Irish-language summer colleges for teenagers, was the subject of a well-organised campaign which successfully saw it maintained, although reduced by 10% for the duration of the crisis, as described in 5.4.3.1. Section 5.6 offers a detailed discussion of resistance to austerity in a Gaeltacht context.

Further to those measures that focused directly on the DCRGA, many of the cuts proposed by *An Bord Snip* for rural Ireland more generally were also of direct relevance to Gaeltacht communities. Cuts to county councils, the *Local Development Social Inclusion Programme* and the *Community Development Programme* all further reduced the support available to such rural areas, as too did the recommendation to close or amalgamate primary schools with fewer than 100 pupils. With almost all Gaeltacht schools being in rural locations, this proposal threatened up to 100 primary schools therein, although it was at least partly resisted due to a nationwide campaign driven by both parents' groups and teachers' unions (Save Our Small Schools, 2012). Similarly, the proposed discontinuation of the *Rural Environmental Protection Scheme* and other similar supports to disadvantaged regions such as the *Rural Transport Scheme* created a deeply unstable environment in what were already often vulnerable, underprivileged areas.

While the CLS described above called for a large-scale programme of community investment in the Gaeltacht in 2007, in 2009 *An Bord Snip Nua* advised the exact opposite – a drastic programme of cuts that amounted to a rapid intensification of the state's steady process of withdrawal from supporting the Gaeltacht, which was disproportionately affected by the cuts. As would be predicted by much academic literature on public policy, the neoliberal direction pursued by the state throughout the Celtic Tiger proved to be a path dependent one, meaning that "initial moves in one direction elicit[ed] further moves in that same direction . . . [with] the trajectory of change up to that point *constrain[ing]* the trajectory after that point" (Kay, 2005: 553, original emphasis). In the tense post-2008 economic climate many further neoliberal measures were thus implemented, in both the public and private sectors.

Significantly, perhaps the most important example of community resistance to austerity in the context of this thesis, the *Guth na Gaeltachta* campaign, was set up with the specific aim of opposing the recommendations of *An Bord Snip*, as section 5.6.1 explains.

#### **4.2.2 The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030**

Emerging from a commitment made in the *Statement on the Irish Language 2006* (see 1.5), the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030* (henceforth “*Strategy*”) was the most detailed exposition of state language policy since 1965 (Government of Ireland, 1965; see 1.4). Although it was originally planned for the *Strategy* to be published in 2008, this process was delayed for several years due to difficulties recruiting suitable consultants (Ó Murchú, 2008: 42).

Most unserendipitously, the *Strategy*’s eventual launch in December 2010 (at which the Taoiseach introduced it in Irish) took place during the same week that the Troika took control of state finances. In this context it is unsurprising that the *Strategy* contained only an extremely watered-down set of goals compared to the recommendations made in the CLS, despite it claiming that the government “accepts the broad thrust of the *Comprehensive Linguistic Study*” (Government of Ireland, 2010: 20). With the overarching goal of “creating a bilingual society”, the *Strategy* aims to increase the visibility of Irish in public life, ensure the provision of services through Irish and increase the number of Irish-speaking families (Government of Ireland, 2010: 3). Furthermore, it contains the aim of increasing to 250,000 the number of daily Irish speakers outside the education system by 2030 (Government of Ireland, 2010: 9), a figure which would have required a seemingly impossible 6% annual increase. In the Gaeltacht, it aims for a 25% increase of daily speakers, leading, unsurprisingly, to the widespread derision of these goals as being utterly unattainable (e.g. Ó hÉallaithe, 2017a). Ó Giollagáin (2014b: 104-6) has provided an in-depth comparison between the recommendations of the CLS and the *Strategy*, and consequently they will not be detailed here.

It must be noted, however, that the historical precedents described in 1.3 and 1.4 and international literature on evidence-based policy making would make it seem extremely unlikely that the state would ever have implemented the full range of recommendations included in the CLS (or, indeed, the *Strategy* itself), even if the economic climate had not been so trying at the time of its

introduction. Nonetheless, politicians at the highest level stated both at its launch in 2010 and over the following years that the crisis significantly impinged on the state's ability to implement the *Strategy* (Irish Independent, 2010; Seanad Éireann, 2017). While plausible, this may also be more a convenient excuse for a policy trajectory which the state would have pursued regardless. Similar to opinions espoused by Klein (2007), Mirowski (2013) and Krugman (2015) regarding the use of crises as opportunities to implement radical neoliberal policy reforms long since desired by elites (see also 2.2), Ó Giollagáin sees the recession as providing an “effective camouflage for language policy insincerity” with the

inertia and inaction . . . plausibly depicted as an unfortunate off-shoot of negative economic circumstances rather than a lack of will and concern. It is probably more realistic to depict the excuse of the economic recession for the general institutional lassitude as a carriage of convenience for a much-awaited exit strategy from ideological and policy commitments for which the elite no longer has any patience (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 114).

In this way, under the rubric of fiscal responsibility, the state has been able to accelerate the de-regulation of language policy, just as the crisis has “facilitated the rolling out of drastic reforms more rapidly and thoroughly than would otherwise have been possible” in a wide range of public policy (Mercille and Murphy, 2015: 27). In doing so, the “deepening” of neoliberalism in Ireland has been promoted to a degree “that had not yet been seen and with a noted vigour on the part of political and economic elites” (Mercille and Murphy, 2015: 27).

Despite the weak nature of its proposals, it is widely understood that the *Strategy* has not been implemented in any meaningful way since its launch in 2010 (Walsh, 2014b; Tuairisc.ie, 2017b). Walsh, having initially welcomed the *Strategy* as offering the best chance for positive development that was likely to be available to the Irish-speaking community (2011b), observed that by early 2014 the *Strategy* was “*geall le corpán*” and that Irish was “*níos imeallaí ná riamh sa státseirbhís*” (2014a). A clear illustration of this status is to be seen in the fact that the Department of the Taoiseach's report on how they have

been implementing the *Strategy* in their own department, published at the quarter-way point of the policy in December 2015, contained just 225 words. It stated merely that the Taoiseach was the chairperson of the committee dedicated to the *Strategy*'s implementation, that his department was in discussions with stakeholders to overcome the EU derogation described in 1.5 and that future schemes of the department would specify roles requiring fluency in Irish, with no such positions existing at the time of its writing (Department of the Taoiseach, 2015).

Furthermore, the DCRGA 2014 review of the strategy's overall progress was so similar to those issued by individual state departments that it would seem certain that it was simply copied and pasted from the various department reports (Tuairisc.ie, 2014a). This level of indifference clearly demonstrates why, during the initial consultations about the *Strategy*, many experts claimed that the role of monitoring the *Strategy*'s implementation should be given to the Coimisinéir Teanga, rather than allowing the DCRGA to police itself. As with the vast majority of recommendations made during the public consultation on a draft of the *Strategy* in 2009, however, such sentiments went unheeded (Ó Giollagáin, 2014a: 26). This non-implementation has meant, effectively, a continuation of the pre-*Strategy* policy status quo, but with much less funding now available for policy implementation (Ó Giollagáin, 2014a: 35).

In a further blow to the *Strategy*'s effectiveness, in July 2017 the Oireachtas committee chaired by the Taoiseach which oversaw the implementation of the strategy was abolished. While they had been meeting far less frequently than other committees and the importance of the *Strategy* to their work had been greatly reduced since receiving the additional duty of overseeing arts policy in 2016 (Tuairisc.ie, 2017c), this nonetheless further relegated the *Strategy* to insignificance. Jordan and Richardson's concept of "placebo policies" which aim to create the appearance of action on issues in which the state is fundamentally uninterested is brought to mind (1987: 233).

Unsurprisingly in this context, a 2018 report compiled for TG4 (the Irish-language television station) by Seosamh Mac Donnacha, one of the main



authors of the CLS, concluded that none of the structures proposed in the *Strategy* were operational, with many of them never having been established (Tuairisc.ie, 2018a).

Shortly after this damning report was issued, an action plan for the *Strategy* was published in July 2018 with the aim of progressing the functioning of the policy (Government of Ireland, 2018). This came a full year late, however, with the result that it was renamed the *Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022* instead of covering the five-year period 2017-2022 as intended (Dáil Éireann, 2018a). While containing various re-affirmations and commitments to implement areas of the *Strategy* that had been largely ignored over the previous eight years, this document, as Ó Giollagáin (2018) describes, contains little that is sufficient to address the continuing erosion of the Gaeltacht that was predicted in 2007 by the CLS, with it amounting largely to a continuation of the policy trajectory pursued in recent years.

#### **4.2.3 The *Gaeltacht Act 2012***

While not discussed with anything like the same frequency as the *Strategy* by either Irish-language media or advocacy groups, the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* (hereafter “2012 Act”) is arguably of far greater significance for the Gaeltacht, not least because it, unlike the *Strategy*, has been largely implemented since its enactment. As an update to both the original *Gaeltacht Act 1956* which established the current Gaeltacht boundaries and the *Údarás na Gaeltachta Act 1979*, the 2012 Act – which gives legislative effect to some of the goals of the *Strategy* – was the first significant piece of legislation focused on the Gaeltacht in over 30 years. The 2012 Act was deeply controversial at the time of its proposal, however, being criticised heavily by both opposition parties and language promotion groups. Despite over 150 amendments being proposed while the bill was going through the Dáil, all of these were rejected by the Fine Gael-Labour coalition during the three hours allocated for their discussion, thereby prompting a walkout of the opposition, a very uncommon occurrence in Irish politics (Irish Examiner, 2012).

The language planning process laid out in the 2012 Act aims to redefine the Gaeltacht on the basis of Language Planning Areas (LPAs).<sup>5</sup> Based originally on recommendations contained in the CLS and accepted in the *Strategy* which aimed to redraw the Gaeltacht borders to more accurately reflect the reality of the use of Irish as a community language, the official Gaeltacht was divided into 26 LPAs by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (as it was titled until May 2016). Each of these areas is required by the 2012 Act to write a language plan and have it approved by the department in order to retain their Gaeltacht status (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2016: 37-48).

As described in 1.3, ever since the first Gaeltacht commission reported on the extent of Irish-speaking areas in 1926, the official borders of the Gaeltacht have been somewhat aspirational in their expansiveness. This exaggeration continues to be a source of frustration for some Gaeltacht activists (Ó hÉallaithe, 2017a). While the 2012 Act could conceivably have led to a re-drawing of the borders, the political class' reluctance to formally remove Gaeltacht status from any area means that language plans (completion of which is the sole requirement for the retention of Gaeltacht status) are being written in even the weakest category C areas in which language shift is effectively complete. Illustrating the scale of this reticence to concede any part of the official Gaeltacht, during my fieldwork an ÚnaG employee told me of the frustration of working with language planning committees who are incapable of conducting their affairs through Irish (see also 5.8).

In effectively placing the language planning duties formerly conducted by various state institutions onto voluntary community groups, the procedures spelled out in the act are strikingly neoliberal, bringing Williams' and Morris' observations on the "grass-rootism of neo-liberalism" to mind, with neoliberalism often being implemented via highly localised structures (2000:

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<sup>5</sup> Despite being a *Gaeltacht* act, the legislation also makes provision for the legal recognition of Irish-speaking networks outside the Gaeltacht, as well as for "Gaeltacht service towns" in or near the Gaeltacht in which services are available to Gaeltacht inhabitants.

180). Through outsourcing language planning responsibilities to marginalised communities, the state, under the guise of democratising the language planning process, is effectively able to withdraw from a key part of its historic commitment to language revitalisation. As Ó Giollagáin has observed

[i]t seems that the Act overestimates the capacity of local Gaeltacht communities to influence societal trends through local plans, while at the same time ignoring the potential of significant realms of state to exacerbate existing trends towards linguistic assimilation (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 111).

The implementation of this aspect of the 2012 Act is discussed further in sections 4.2.4 and 5.8.

Commenting on both the *Strategy* and the 2012 Act, an employee in the Irish-language sector pointed out that the far-reaching changes instigated by both of these documents were matched not with extra resources for their implementation, but rather with the significant budgetary cuts detailed in 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 below:

*M: [T]háinig an dá rud sin isteach ach níor cuireadh aon acmhainní breise ar fáil i ndáiríre chun an obair sin a dhéanamh. In aon polasaí rialtais eile thuigfeadh siad go mbeidh costas ag baint le polasaí chomh mór leis sin agus chomh fairsing leis sin a chur i bhfeidhm agus go mbeadh acmhainní breise curtha ar fáil. Y'know a mhalairt de sin – bhain siad airgead ón dá institiúid is mó a bhaineann leis ó thaobh cúrsaí maoinithe . . . So y'know níl siad ag tabhairt faoi seo i ndáiríre muna bhfuil siad ag cur na hacmhainní ar fáil freisin.*

Another employee of a language promotion organisation explained the provisions of the 2012 Act and the manner in which it was forced through by the government as being a response from a civil service which had been frustrated by language rights victories achieved in recent years:

*B: [A]g breathnú ar an rud go stairiúil, má théann tú siar b'fhéidir 15 bliana nó pé rud, d'éirigh linne, d'éirigh le pobal na Gaeilge buanna áiride a bhaint amach, le streachailt, mar ní bhaineann muid aon rud amach gan streachailt. Ach bhí rudaí ar nós TG4, mar shampla, stádas na Gaeilge san Eoraip, an Acht Teanga – agus aríst ní raibh aon duine go hiomlán sásta ach bhí siad ann. Agus fuair muid Coimisinéir Teanga, agus go háirid go bhfuair muid Coimisinéir Teanga chomh láidir sin. Mo*

*thuairim féin, scanraigh sé sin méid áiride daoine, agus scanraigh sé an státseirbhís . . . Ní raibh taithí acu ag plé le leithéid Seán Ó Cuirreáin [an chéad choimisinéir] agus go raibh orthu glacadh leis an rud seo, [a bheith] dáiríre faoin rud. Agus ba léir gur frithionsaí cuid dhó seo [Acht na Gaeltachta] . . . Toradh nádúrtha é sin ar an ais-throid sin, bhí sé thar a bheith lag. Bhí sé dochreidte ó thaobh córas polaitiúil nach raibh siad sásta glacadh le oiread is leasú amháin.*

While there may well be some truth to this sentiment, it must also be remembered that the 2012 Act was introduced at a time when Ireland was still beholden to the Troika's structural adjustment programme, unemployment had risen from under 5% in early 2008 to nearly 15% in 2012 and the state had already spent €70 billion on bank bailouts (Murphy, 2014: 135). As Hardiman and Regan noted at the time: "[a]ll budget decisions must be cleared with the Troika, fiscal performance is subject to quarterly reviews and Troika personnel are embedded in the core government departments" (Hardiman and Regan, 2012: 9). Furthermore, the conditions of the *Memorandum of Understanding* between Ireland and the Troika "required a continued liberalisation of Ireland's political economy and increased marketisation of previously protected public spheres" (Murphy, 2014: 134).

While, then, the unsuitability of the 2012 Act may be connected to the attitude of hostile elements within the civil service (see 4.2.9 for detailed discussion of this issue), it would seem more likely that the extraordinarily constrained economic circumstances facing the state by mid-2012 made it all but inevitable that the implementation of the 2012 Act would deliver a far from satisfactory outcome. The truth, of course, may well lie in a mixture of these elements, with the crisis both providing an excuse for *and* requiring an accelerated withdrawal of state support for the language. Either way, the enactment of the 2012 Act and the provisions it contains echoes Williams' and Morris' comment that neoliberalism means that language planning "can no longer be conceived of in terms of the modernist conception of state benevolence, acting on behalf of the language group within a general framework of democracy and rights" (2000: 180).

Although Ó Giollagáin's description of the act as "the half-hearted conviction of a reluctant duty" (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 111) is fully justified, his analysis fails to give sufficient attention to the economic and political conditions of crisis in which it was produced and, like my interviewee above, places excessive weight on the machinations of "anti-Irish" public servants (see 4.2.9).

Furthermore, in his detailed account of the state's ignoring the recommendations of the CLS in both the *Strategy* and the 2012 Act, Ó Giollagáin (2014b: 103-15) does not seem to acknowledge the fact that such ignoring of expert advice is not at all an uncommon occurrence in public policy making, either in Ireland or internationally. As discussed in 4.2.7 below, evidence-based policy making is very often the exception rather than the rule. Rather than being necessarily reflective of a political class expressly opposed to Irish, it can plausibly be seen as a product of the bounded rationality and "satisficing" which policy makers and the elite inevitably face, whereby they can only hope to make reasonably satisfactory policy in the face of incomplete knowledge and resources (Cairney, 2012: 95-8), as well as the structural factors which constrain their actions (Cairney, 2012: 111-31).

Tellingly, the mark of neoliberal austerity measures is very visible in relation to the 2012 Act, with the *Explanatory and Financial Memorandum* attached to it stating

[i]t is estimated that Part 3 of the Bill [regarding the ÚnaG election] will result in savings of approximately €100,000 annually and up to €500,000 every five years. It is not expected that the remaining Parts of the Bill will result in any additional costs to the Exchequer (Government of Ireland, 2012: 44).

This note provides a striking counterpoint to the various public assurances from the government after the enactment of the 2012 Act that resources would be made available for the implementation of the language planning process laid out in the 2012 Act – a process discussed in detail in 5.8. Indeed, in accordance with the sentiments of this memorandum, what money that has since been made available for the implementation of the language planning process is being taken from the budget previously used to fund improvements

to Gaeltacht roads – a great number of which are of a poor standard (Dáil Éireann, 2017). The act also had significant implications for ÚnaG, as discussed in the following section.

#### **4.2.4 Údarás na Gaeltachta**

Since its foundation in 1979, ÚnaG, the Gaeltacht development authority, has successfully attracted a significant number of enterprises to the Gaeltacht, at least for the short term. Implementing a localised version of the national economic strategy, this has been primarily achieved through offering tax breaks and other incentives to companies who are willing to locate there. Although this approach has been widely critiqued as being unsuitable for Gaeltacht development (e.g. Walsh, 2011a; section 5.3.4), the proposal by *An Bord Snip Nua* (4.2.1) that ÚnaG be abolished outright caused much concern for Gaeltacht communities. While this abolition did not ultimately occur, the institution, as will be seen, was severely debilitated by the ensuing cuts, which were much more severe than those experienced by comparable non-Gaeltacht institutions.

Indeed, one of the most expedient ways of gaining an insight into “covert language policy” (Shohamy, 2006) in the wake of the crash is through examining the differential treatment visited on ÚnaG compared to its non-Gaeltacht equivalents. As figure 4.1 shows, ÚnaG’s budget was reduced much more significantly than those of either the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) or Enterprise Ireland, despite it performing the functions of these two organisations combined, albeit in a Gaeltacht-specific context.

State attitudes towards ÚnaG are all the more evident when one considers that these cuts were made to an agency whose main duty – like the IDA and Enterprise Ireland – is to create employment, a goal which each government of the post-crash period regularly claimed to be their priority. Furthermore, this reduction was implemented despite an independent report concluding in 2010 that the organisation required a minimum budget of €12m per annum simply to retain those jobs then in the Gaeltacht, without any consideration for

increasing this amount (Ó Clochartaigh, 2013). Unsurprisingly, these cuts led to a significant fall in the numbers employed in ÚnaG client-companies during this period (Conradh na Gaeilge, 2017: 10-1; see also 5.3.2). The agency itself also lost a large proportion of its staff as a result of these measures: while it had had 130 staff members in 2008, this had fallen to 79 ten years later (Oireachtas Éireann, 2018a).

	Údarás na Gaeltachta	Enterprise Ireland	Industrial Development Agency
<b>2008</b>	€25.5 million	€56.4 million	€78.5 million
<b>2015</b>	€6.7 million	€52.7 million	€116 million
<b>% change 2008-15</b>	-73.7%	-6.6%	+47.8%

*Table 4.1 Comparison of enterprise promotion agencies' budgets 2008-15 (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2009a: 9, 2016a: 11; Enterprise Ireland, 2009: 48, 2016: 42; IDA, 2010: 36, 2016: 33).*

As one of my interviewees in Donegal noted:

*A: [Ó] thaobh an Údaráis de, bhí tú ag caint ar bhuiséad caipitil suas le fiche, fiche 's a cúig milliún nó rud éigean mar sin agus tá sé sin rite síos go sé mhilliún. So tá, bhfuil 's agat, íslíú ollmhór tagtha ar an bhuiséad sin agus má chuireann tú sin i gcomórtas le, mar shampla, Enterprise Ireland agus an IDA . . . [N]íl dabht ach go bhfuil, mar a déarfá, teachtaireacht áirid ansin.*

In an interview with a now-retired senior member of ÚnaG who presided over the organisation through both the height of the boom and the worst depths of the recession, he explained the implications of this enormous budget reduction as such:

*S: [T]á ceangal nó nascanna ollmhór idir buiséad eagraíocht agus . . . na torthaí a bhíonn acu. An difear a chonaic mise, nuair a thoisigh mise amach bheadh buiséad caipitil de 26 milliún againn. Bhí na*

*feidhmeannaigh ábalta dul amach agus iad muiníneach astu féin dá mba rud é gur chas siad le infheisteoir nó go raibh infheisteoir ag fiosrú go raibh siad ábalta a bheith láidir faoi agus a rá “is féidir linn cuidiú leat, is féidir linn cuidiú leat”. Now níl aon cheist faoi sin agus ná bíodh ceist faoi. So nuair a thiteann an buiséad go sé nó ocht milliún d’airgead caipitil, b’fhéidir go mbeidh na feidhmeannaigh ag rá an rud céanna, ach. . . déarfadh siadsan “bhuel an bhfuil buiséad agat?”*

One of these *feidhmeannaigh* referred to in the quote above explained his view of the matter to me as follows:

*É: [T]á lá na himeartha caillte againn, you’re not a player anymore. Ní bhíonn daoine ag caint fúinn, ní bhíonn muid ag caint ar an raidió, síleann daoine go bhfuil an cath caillte againn. Tá baint aige sin uilig leis an ghearradh siar tubaisteach a tharla dúinn. Agus an rud eile go bhfuil, anois tá coimhhead iontach teannta ar achan rud a níonn muid. An rud a deir siad faoi neoliberalism, reductive, reductivism . . . reductivity. Tá achan rud gearrtha anuas. Tá monatóireacht mhór déanta ar achan rud. Tá níos mó monatóireacht déanta ar achan rud anois mar tá na budgets chomh teannta.*

As part of its commitment to “strengthening Ireland’s rural fabric”, the *National Development Plan 2018-2027*, launched in February 2018, stated that €178m would be invested in the Gaeltacht, including an “incremental increase in the annual capital allocation to €12 million” for ÚnaG (Government of Ireland, 2018b: 50). No deadline was provided for the fulfilment of this commitment, which, even if implemented in full, will see funding for ÚnaG at less than 50% of the 2008 figure come 2027 (Tuairisc.ie, 2018b). Furthermore, research commissioned by the civil society campaign group *Teacht Aniar* demonstrated that during the four-year period between 2005-9 capital expenditure on the Gaeltacht and islands was €299m, vastly more than the €178m which is promised for the ten-year period from 2018-27. Even based on the assumption that this proposed investment is made in full, expenditure on Irish by 2028 will still be significantly less than it was in 2008. Indeed, this €178m amounts to only slightly more than *half* of what was spent on this sector between 2006-16, post-2008 cutbacks notwithstanding (Byrne, 2018: 10).

Further to these budgetary cuts, in line with other areas of the public service, ÚnaG had a moratorium on recruitment implemented by the Department of



Finance in 2009. When coupled with the incentivised early retirement schemes introduced in 2012, this meant that ÚnaG not only lost almost three quarters of its budget, but also a large amount of its most experienced staff, who have not been replaced, as a Galway-based factory owner with many years of experience dealing with ÚnaG described to me:

*M: Suas go 2008, 2009 b'fhéidir, bhíodar éifeachtach. Bhí sé iontach, bhí tú in ann goil isteach agus cruinniú a bheith agat le Pádraig Ó hAoláin [príomhfheidhmeannach na linne], nó le Jim Keogh a bhí i gceannas ar chúrsaí fostaíochta, cúrsaí tionscail. Ach héis na buiséid a bheith gearrtha, agus sin an rud a tharla leis an Údarás, agus is rud suntasach é seo freisin . . . Nuair a bhí na daoine istigh san Údarás, thosaigh siad amach le Gaeltarra Éireann agus bhí siad in aois an phinsin in 2008-09. Agus tháinig na pacáistí móra . . . Ní bhfuair cuid acu ach rabhadh dhá sheachtain agus cuireadh an gunna lena gcloigeann agus dúradh leob má imíonn tú roimh dheireadh na míosa beidh tú ar an seanphinsin, muna n-imíonn tú beidh tú ar an bpinsin nú. No brainer a bhí ann do na boys ar fad. Agus chailleadar straidhp mór de dhaoine. Agus ghortaigh sé sin an tÚdarás go mór. Timpiste a bhí ann, toisc gur bunaíodh Gaeltarra Éireann [ag an am sin] agus baineadh an cheannasaíocht uilig dhon rud.*

Another ÚnaG employee who I interviewed in 2016, talking about the “*titim thubaisteach*” in employment in ÚnaG’s industrial site in Donegal, told me that there were almost 900 fewer jobs in the estate than there had been during the middle of the Celtic Tiger:

*É: But an difear mór atá ann anois, a Bhen, ná tá 21 comhlacht ar an eastát anois ag fostú 430. Bhí 21 comhlacht i 1998 ag fostú 1,300. So na comhlachtaí atá againn anois tá siad ag fostú níos lú daoine.*

He told me that the crash had seen the end of an era, the end of manufacturing in the area, with the industries now supported on the estate being largely small-scale, local start-ups, as opposed to the industrial plants that had once employed hundreds each. He also commented on the tendency of large international companies to simply re-locate overseas during challenging economic periods:

*É: Na comhlachtaí a d'imigh den chuid is mó is comhlachtaí déantúsaíochta, traidisiúnta a bhí iontu . . . Chuaigh an obair sin uilig go dtí an Áis, go dtí an tSín, go dtí an Ind, go Meicsiceo . . . Níor dhruid*

*ceann ar bith acu, ach ceann amháin, d'aistrigh siad. Sin an rud atá tábhachtach, d'aistrigh siad. Cionn is go dtiocfadh leo 20 oibrí a fháil san Ind ar son pá oibrí amháin anseo.*

While their inability to retain such companies long term is a criticism frequently levelled at ÚnaG, this point goes to the heart of globalised neoliberalism. Such fluidity of capital is a defining trait of this paradigm (Carroll and Sapinski, 2016: 39), and one which is, clearly, almost impossible for a small enterprise promotion agency based on this model to resist while operating in some of the most remote parts of Ireland – particularly so in wake of a budget cut of almost 75%. The FDI model based on attracting footloose international capital is clearly, however, deeply inappropriate for the Gaeltacht, as the many abandoned, dilapidated factories scattered across the Gaeltacht attest. Sections 5.3.2, 5.3.4 and 5.3.5.2 discuss these issues further.

Further to these challenges, under the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*, the elections for the board of ÚnaG was abolished, despite the institution having originally been set up as a result of the Gaeltacht Civil Rights campaign aiming specifically for the creation of a democratic local government institution in the Gaeltacht (1.4; Akutagawa, 1990: 59). Partly undertaken in accordance with the Fine Gael-Labour coalition's *Public Service Reform Plan* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011), it was noted that this reform would save some €500,000 every five years (Irish Times, 2011a; see also 4.2.3 above).

Prior to 2012, three of the 20 members of this board were appointed by the minister responsible for the Gaeltacht, while the remaining 17 were elected by Gaeltacht residents (Walsh, 2011a: 300). In line with the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*, the board is now composed of twelve political appointees selected both by county councils which contain Gaeltacht communities within their jurisdictions and the relevant minister (Government of Ireland, 2012: 26-9).

While ostensibly a democratic forum, it is important to note that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the pre-2012 electoral process for the board. I was often told during interviews that the restructuring made little difference, as the following extracts suggest:

*A: Sílim má théann tú amach agus ceist a chur ar daoine ar an tsráid déarfadh siad nár chuir sé isteach ná amach orthu.*

*C: Ní bheadh muintir [na h-áite seo] ag smaointiú ar Údarás na Gaeltachta. Bheadh a fhios acu go bhfuil sé ann agus go bhfuil baint acu leis an pháirc gnó, ach an gnáthdhuine, sin deireadh a bheadh a fhios acu.*

Despite this rather widespread apathy, several of my informants had much more polarised opinions on the matter. The Galway woman cited in the next extract, for instance, strongly felt that the loss of the election was a severe blow to Gaeltacht communities, greatly reducing political accountability:

*G: Is cuimhneach liom fadó toghchán an Údaráis agus ó, tharraingeodh sé neart cainte. Ó bhíodh an oiread caint air! Agus bhíodh daoine ag tarraingt anuas póstaerí agus cur póstaerí suas agus anuas . . . [A]gus má bhí tú ag iarraidh cead pleanála le haghaidh do theach, abair – mar tá sé chomh deacair cead pleanála a fháil – abair dá mbeifeá héis labhairt le polaiteoir eicínt agus iad ag rá “ó beidh mise in ann cúnamh a thabhairt dhuit faoi sin”. Ó bhíodh sé ina chraic. Agus nuair a thiocfadh siad ag an doras thiúrfá fúthub! Is mó suím, caithfidh mé a rá, a bhíodh i dtoghchán an Údaráis ná sa toghchán náisiúnta. Mar bhí aithne a’d orthub seo, d’fheicfeá chuile áit iad. Agus, y’know, bheifeá ag rá “tiúrfaidh mé vóta dhuit má chuireann tú caoi ar an mbóthar sin. Agus nó go bhfeicfidh mé leoraí ag tarraingt ansin in aice an tí [ní bhfaighidh tú é]”. . . Agus sin é an chaoi a bhfuair tú go leor rudaí déanta. Now ceart nó [contráilte], níl ’s a’m – sin an chaoi ar oibrigh sé. Yeah ‘sé an feall nach bhfuil sé ann níos mó.*

Other informants felt that although the new system was deeply defective, so too was the electoral procedure that preceded it:

*M: D’athraigh Fine Gael agus Labour sin agus fuair siad réidh leis an toghchán agus anois ceaptar daoine ar an bhord bainistíochta an Údaráis agus an caighdeán duine atá siad ag ceapadh . . . An bhfeiceann tú cró na gcearc thíos ansin? . . . Na daoine atá siad ag ceapadh ar bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta, ní chuirfinn i mbun an fuckin cró cearc sin iad.*

*B: Dáiríre?*

*M: Yeah. Timeservers. Ní thig leotha áit a fháil ar chomhairle contae. Seasann siad don chomhairle contae agus teipeann orthu. So níl muintir na háite sásta iad a thoghadh isteach i gcomhairle contae so deir na páirtithe cuirfidh muid suas thú le ceapadh go bord bainistíochta*

*Údarás na Gaeltachta, you're so fuckin shite at everything else, cuirfidh muid isteach ar fuckin bord bainistíochta Údarás na Gaeltachta thú.*

*B: [gáire]*

*M: But sin an fhírinne! . . . [E]ven nuair a bhí toghchán ann – caidé a rinne Fianna Fáil i gContae fuckin na Gaillimhe – fear nach raibh Gaeilg aige?! Agus fuair sé isteach! . . . See thíos sa phub, fad is nach bhfuil duine ar bith sa phub ón Údarás, d'aontódh achan duine liom.*

While expressed rather vociferously, such a sentiment is reflective of a significant minority of opinions I heard, and, indeed, would not seem to be without some basis in fact. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to interview several former members of the board, and while most of them appeared to be diligent and committed individuals, one interviewee seemed to adhere to the stereotypes suggested in the above extract, speaking of his time on the board as such:

*S: [M]una mbeadh rudaí ann a bhainfeadh liom, ní labhróinn...Deir [comhalta boird eile] liom cúpla babhta, haigh bhfuil tú ag éisteacht leis seo?! Ar do cheantarsa atá muid ag caint! Agus mise i mo chodladh! [gáire]*

The existence of such individuals understandably meant that a significant number of my interviewees believed that the majority of their communities were not overly upset about the removal of the election. Nonetheless, its discontinuation has certainly not improved the standing of ÚnaG in the communities it serves. As Ó Neachtain has argued, the lack of political autonomy afforded to the Gaeltacht has been “a serious handicap in terms of the linguistic community’s authority and capacity to plan and implement programs which might more effectively contribute to the language community’s survival and sustainable development” (2014: 367-8; see also Breathnach, 2000).

Although a blow to Gaeltacht democracy, however dysfunctional it may have been, this type of decision is not unique to the Gaeltacht. As Murphy noted, “further centralisation of power has been a key institutional strategy of both crisis governments”, with many “key decisions and legislative changes hav[ing]

bypassed parliamentary processes” (2014: 138) in the wake of the crash. Indeed, Bachrach and Baratz’s famous conception of the “second face of power” (discussed further in 1.4 and 4.2.10.1) notes the appointment of supporters of the status quo to boards as a key way in which the powerful can set agendas and prevent public discussion of certain issues (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970: 54-9, 70; see also Hay, 2002: 175).

In light of these various developments, it is of little surprise that in a letter from the trade union *Unite* to the management of *ÚnaG* in summer 2016 it was claimed that the relationship between staff and management was “at an all-time low” and “on the brink of collapse” (Tuairisc.ie, 2016a). While interviewing a long-term employee of *ÚnaG* shortly after this story broke publicly in the media, he explained the situation to me as being even worse than was reported:

*B: [C]éard faoi morale san eagraíocht . . .?*

*É: [deasaíonn sé a bhrathadóir síos don urlár le taispeáint go bhfuil sé íseal]*

*B: Muise?*

*É: Iontach olc.*

*B: Chonaic mé an méid a bhí ar Thuairisc.ie.*

*É: 100% cruinn. Tá rudaí níos measa ná sin fiú.*

*B: Dáiríre? Agus cén uair a thoisigh sé sin?*

*É: Trí nó ceithre bliain ó shin.*

*B: Mar gheall ar...?*

*É: Rationalisation.*

*B: Na coinníollacha oibre agus é sin?*

*É: Yes. Tá an tríú cuid den fhoireann [imithe], nuair a imíonn daoine cuireann siad cosc duin’ neacht eile a fháil. I bhfad níos mó oibre a dhéanamh le níos lú daoine, daoine ag an bharr, brú ón roinn ag iarraidh an rud uilig a chúngú isteach, níl siad ag iarraidh seo agus siúd a chur i bhfeidhm. Tá an dúshlán acusan agus tá siad ar an chúigiú cuid den*

*budget a bhí deich mbliana ó shin. Tá siad ar 30% níos lú foirne, tá an foireann atá fágtha aosta. Níl duine ar bith úr ag teacht isteach. Thit siad amach leis an cheardchumann. Tá siad seo ag iarraidh na rudaí seo a bhrú ar aghaidh gan pairtnéireacht ar bith, gan a ghoil i gcomhairle. Dhá vóta muiníne caillte ag an bhainistíocht le 70% le dhá mhí . . . Tá an bainistíocht ag brú, ag bullaíocht ar dhaoine.*

Similar to the rest of the public sector (see 4.2.9), then, it is clear that ÚnaG was deeply affected by austerity measures, which certainly does not bode well for their future ability to drive the “preservation and extension” of Irish in the Gaeltacht as their remit requires (in Walsh, 2011a: 298). Despite the reduction in the resources available to them, however, responsibility for the language planning process required by the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* was delegated to ÚnaG by the state department responsible for the Gaeltacht.

With its well-documented history of promoting industrial development in such a way that it contributed the Anglicisation of the Gaeltacht (Mac an Iomaire, 1983; Hindley, 1990: 183-4; Ó Murchú, 1993: 483; Walsh, 2010), it is unsurprising that a more language-focused approach would be recommended for ÚnaG. Indeed, recommendations to this effect were made by both the second *Gaeltacht Commission* (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 2002: 16) and in Ó Cinnéide et al. (2001: 147-48), and were beginning to be adopted come 2005 (Walsh, 2011a: 313). In light of the cutbacks to both budget and staff numbers, however, the effective implementation of the language planning process has been problematic, and ÚnaG has delegated much of these duties to local *ceanneagraíochtaí* (“head organisations”) – typically community co-operatives, which were warned that their funding would be cut further if they were unwilling to comply with this measure. As one co-op member explained:

*B: Go bunúsach tá Roinn na Gaeltachta ag rá tá freagracht againne so tá siad ag rá le Údarás na Gaeltachta “caithfidh sibh é a chur i gcrích nó bainfidh muid an t-airgead díbh” agus tá Údarás na Gaeltachta tar éis a rá leis an bpobal, “caithfidh sibhse é a chur i gcrích nó bainfidh muid an t-airgead díbh”. Agus tá, tá mé lárnach sa gcóras sin mé féin, ar an receiving end, agus sin atá ag tarlú.*

In turn, as predicted by Ó Giollagáin (2014b: 109), the co-operatives have delegated these plans to voluntary community committees, often functioning

without adequate resources or expertise. This matter is discussed in detail in 5.8.

As Mercille and Murphy point out, such withdrawal of the state from areas in which it previously intervened significantly is entirely in accordance with the neoliberal project of privatisation and restructuring (2015: 91). When one considers Williams' contention "that political autonomy and economic autarchy [are] the twin pre-conditions . . . of successful language regeneration" (1991: 3), the removal of both the election for the ÚnaG board (flawed as it was) and the large majority of the organisation's budget, government policy towards the institution in recent years cannot but be seen as deeply damaging to the vitality of the Gaeltacht as a whole. There was, however, a welcome growth in employment created by ÚnaG in 2017, with indications that the growth the national economy has been experiencing since 2016 was beginning to reach the Gaeltacht. Although this growth was modest in most areas (in Galway, for instance, the net gain was only one job), the 103 jobs created in Donegal were a welcome reprieve from the difficulties suffered in that county in recent years (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2017).

#### **4.2.5 The department of state responsible for the Gaeltacht**

The department of state responsible for the Gaeltacht was founded in 1956 under the same act that gave legal definition to the current Gaeltacht boundaries. As described in 1.5, it was known simply as the Department of the Gaeltacht until 1993. A designated minister was therefore able to represent Gaeltacht concerns at the cabinet table, giving the Gaeltacht significant representation in internal government debate. In 1993 it had its remit extended and became the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. While this title has gone through many permutations since then, with its rebranding as the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht affairs (DAHRRGA) in May 2016 it seemed that the Gaeltacht aspect of the portfolio was becoming ever more marginal. Indeed, in June 2017 a cabinet reshuffle proposed removing the word Gaeltacht from the title entirely, replacing it with a "Department of Culture", although this plan was not ultimately implemented,

becoming instead the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Nonetheless, the Irish-speaking community's continued tendency to refer to the "Department of the Gaeltacht" is more of a throwback than a reality, with the Gaeltacht often appearing at the end of a long list of largely unrelated briefs – a "Frankenstein department" covering the "bean an tí, ballet, bogs, and broadband", as one opposition politician claimed after the 2016 reshuffle (Irish Times, 2016a; see also Mac Donnacha, 2013: 10).

While the continued existence of a department with "Gaeltacht" somewhere in the title perhaps obscures this fact, the post-2008 developments concerning the department arguably amounted to an implementation in all but name of those proposals made by *An Bord Snip Nua* which aimed to abolish the then Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA). As 4.2.1 detailed, the *Bord Snip Nua* recommended this abolition with the aim of saving some €151.1m. The DCRGA was the only department whose outright closure was recommended.

Following the spirit of the *Bord Snip* recommendations, if not the letter, a government plan in 2010 proposed to reduce the department's budget from €105m to €30m between 2010-16 (Department of Finance, 2010: 101). Unlike the great majority of government plans and policies that concern the Gaeltacht which languish unimplemented for years, this one was executed in a significantly shorter timescale than that which was proposed: a minister of state in the department stated in 2016 that they lost 70% of their budget in just three years, 2008-11 (Irish Times, 2016b; see also Ó Murchú, 2014: 210). This is a huge reduction by any standards and one which has not been restored (Byrne, 2018). Although the 2018 budget saw the department receive €2.5m extra to spend on Irish and the Gaeltacht, this was just half of the additional €5m that their pre-budget submission to the Department of Finance claimed was necessary to meet its requirements (Tuairisc.ie, 2018c). Furthermore, as Byrne (2018) demonstrates, total capital expenditure on the Gaeltacht and islands by 2017 was over seven times lower than in 2008, having fallen from €75.7m to €10.9m during this time (see also 4.2.4).



Like many sectors facing neoliberal restructuring, the expanded remit of the department saw it left with a greater workload but much less funding, especially after having been given the additional remits of “regional and rural” affairs in 2016. As a result of the disproportionate cuts the Gaeltacht sub-sector faced within the department, as someone working therein told me, it is now probably the smallest division of the smallest state department: *“seans maith gurb é muidinne an rannóg is lú [sa státchóras]”*. Indeed, this informant went on to claim that there is now only one civil service office which operates entirely through Irish, although this office, in Donegal, has only three staff members.

This interviewee also told me that since the cutbacks removed their budget for community work, this same office now conducts work largely unrelated to the Gaeltacht: *“thiocfadh leis an oifig seo a bheith áit ar bith anois, ní bhaineann sé leis an Ghaeltacht”*. Their standing in the community reflects this – none of the employees I spoke to in the factories directly adjacent to their office were able to tell me where I would find *“Roinn na Gaeltachta”* when I asked for directions.

In light of this, when *An Bord Snip Nua* recommended that ÚnaG and the department responsible for the Gaeltacht should both be abolished, the core aim of their proposals was largely implemented, with these institutions receiving huge reductions to their budgets, a view expressed by this same department employee:

*P: Bhí siad ag iarraidh deireadh a chur linn ar fad, nach raibh? Bhuel, bhí siad ag iarraidh nach mbeadh baint ar bith ag an Roinn leis an obair ar an talamh, go mbeadh sin uilig tugtha don Údarás agus nach mbeadh ionainne ach cineál policy makers. Agus is dócha gur shin an rud a tharla cuid mhaith den bhealach . . . níor tharla sé go huile is go hiomlán ach tá scéim na bhfoghlaimeoirí still againn, ach níl baint ar bith againn le cúrsaí infreastruchtúir níos mó.*

Much of this infrastructural work which is referred to involved those schemes which have historically been used to incentivise the use of Irish and retain the population of the Gaeltacht, as explained in 4.2.1. While, as Ó Broithe (2012) explains, the support scheme for parents of Irish-speaking children was

sometimes problematic in its implementation, it was nonetheless another important LPP measure. The following extract taken from an interview with a Donegal parent who discussed this scheme's discontinuation is informative:

*A: Rinneadh moltaí, bhfuil 's agat, chun feabhas [a chur ar Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge] sa Staidéar Cuimsitheach agus rinne . . . Guth na Gaeltachta, Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, rinne muid moltaí chun feabhas a chur ar an scéim. Ach mhol muid uilig nár chóir deireadh a chur leis. But cuireadh deireadh leis agus níor cuireadh aon rud ina áit! So sin an rud atá mé ag rá, tógadh an deis, tapadh an deis le deireadh a chur le cuid mhór rudaí. Mar shampla ceann de na rudaí eile a cuireadh deireadh leis nó an scéim scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta, bhfuil 's agat, do mhic léinn dara leibhéal. So bhí tú cineál ag tabhairt incentive do dhaoine a gcuid scolaíochta a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge. Cuireadh deireadh leis. Caidé a cuireadh ina áit? Rud ar bith!*

Similar to the debate on the 2012 Act (see 4.2.3) and the rationalisation of the voluntary sector discussed in the following section, there was a clear refusal on the part of the state to negotiate such matters, with these cuts being implemented in disregard of both expert recommendation (e.g. Ó Broithe, 2012) and community will. The beginning of the crisis in 2008 and the punctuated equilibrium thereby created thus opened a policy window which allowed reform of the department to take place at a very rapid pace, reminiscent once again of the processes described by Klein (2007) or Mirowski (2013; see also 2.2; 4.2.2).

#### **4.2.6 Foras na Gaeilge's New Funding Model**

Foras na Gaeilge (henceforth "FnaG") was founded in 1999 under the Good Friday Agreement which ended the violent conflict in the North of Ireland. It operates under the aegis of An Foras Teanga, which also supervises The Ulster-Scots Agency, receiving 75% of its funding from the southern state and 25% from the north. Its all-island jurisdiction sees it function primarily as a funding agency distributing grants to various voluntary Irish-language organisations and community projects. Despite not receiving the significant increases in its budget that comparable institutions such as The Arts Council got during the Celtic Tiger, FnaG saw its budget (most of which is used to promote the language outside the Gaeltacht) peak at €20,125,000 in 2007,

from which point it began to decline (Conradh na Gaeilge, 2017: 8-9). The organisation's budget for 2018 was €14,532,000, 28% below its 2007 level, having received no increase at any time over this period. When inflation is taken into account, FnaG's budget for 2018 was 38% below the 2007 figure (Conradh na Gaeilge, 2017: 8-9).

In December 2009, FnaG was directed by the North-South Ministerial Council (which has ultimate oversight of FnaG's work) to undertake a major re-organisation of the 19 language promotion organisations which received their "core" funding from the agency. The stated purpose for this re-structuring was to eliminate duplication of efforts amongst these groups and reduce overheads. Although rationalisation of this nature might well have taken place regardless of the 2008 crash, budgetary contraction certainly expediated this process. As FnaG's 2008 annual report states:

The change in economic circumstances worldwide was the most significant event during the year. It reminded us all of the importance of careful spending to ensure value for money. This gave rise to the review of corefunded organisations, although it was not the main reason for it (Foras Teanga, 2009: 8).

As discussed in 4.2.1, 4.2.9 and 5.9.2, in accordance with the recommendations of *An Bord Snip Nua*, rationalisation was taking place at this time across all manner of public bodies and so-called "third sector" organisations, not just within the Irish-language sector.

FnaG initially proposed two possible methods of rationalisation. One would have seen language promotion activities contracted out via short-term tenders to organisations which did not receive any core funding from the agency. The other option proposed to maintain core funding, but make it available to a much smaller number of organisations (Ó Murchú, 2014: 239).

FnaG ultimately decided to pursue the latter of these two proposals, seemingly seeing this as the least unpopular option. It was duly announced that this so-called "New Funding Model" would see thirteen of the nineteen core-funded organisations disbanded and their functions merged with those of the

remaining six organisations. The *20-Year Strategy* (see 4.2.2) re-affirmed this course of action, committing to “a radical re-organisation of State-funded language organisations” – one of the few goals that have been implemented since the *Strategy*’s introduction (Government of Ireland, 2010: 25).

This proposal to close the majority of core-funded organisations was strongly opposed by both the sector and the vast majority of submissions to a brief public consultation process (Ó Murchú, 2014: 239-40). In opposing the New Funding Model, core-funded organisations insisted that they were already collaborating on efforts to increase effectiveness and reduce duplication. FnaG dismissed these efforts, however, as an employee of one of the core-funded organisations told me:

*B: Bhí [Conradh na Gaeilge], bhí Glór na nGael, bhí Comhluadar, bhí an tOireachtas agus bhí cúpla dream eile [ag obair le chéile chun réiteach a fháil ar dhúblú na hoibre]. Bhí a lán oibre déanta anseo, bhí plean oibre curtha le chéile againn, go dtiocfadh muid le chéile ó thaobh roinnt áiseanna . . . Fós is féidir le gach grúpa [cloí] lena gclár oibre féin, but cinnte níos mó comhoibriú. But just dhiúltaigh Foras na Gaeilge plé leis sin, i ndáiríre bhí olc orthu go rabhamar ag plé leis sin, mar, again, ‘sé an rud céanna ó thaobh cuid de na rudaí . . . leis an státseirbhís agus dul ar ais go hAer Árann [see 4.2.9; 5.6.3.1], bhí plean ag an bhForas, bhí siad ag iarraidh an rud seo a chur tríd, my way or the highway . . . Dá mba rud é go raibh tusa i mbun comhlachta nó i mbun gnó . . . agus go raibh ort athrú ollmhór a dhéanamh, ní ghabhfadh tú ina mbun ar an gcaoi a rinne Foras na Gaeilge é . . . Ní raibh aon risk assessment de shaghas éigean, de shaghas ar bith déanta.*

FnaG’s refusal to engage with the sector’s own proposals for reform, as well as their disregard for a great many other attempts by the sector to challenge the process, created a very fraught relationship between the agency and the core-funded sector. While space does not permit a full discussion of these developments, Ó Murchú (2014: 237-96) offers an exhaustive account of the affair. Notably, however, the voluntary sector claimed that they had “been consistently frustrated in every attempt [they] made to engage with the process” (Ó Murchú, 2014: 248) and that “none of their arguments at meetings nor . . . the documentation they provided [were] taken seriously or fed in any way into [FnaG’s] deliberations” (Ó Murchú, 2014: 242). Such was the level of

dissatisfaction that fifteen of the nineteen organisations eventually took to boycotting meetings with FnaG, stating that effective negotiation was being made impossible by, amongst other issues, FnaG's refusal to make pertinent documentation available before such meetings. The process nonetheless proceeded, with FnaG repeatedly citing the need to implement the directions of the North-South Ministerial Council. FnaG's board of directors – themselves paid appointees of the north and south governments – approved various contentious proposals despite the absence of productive discussion with key stakeholders (Ó Murchú, 2014: 239). As an employee of FnaG itself told me:

*K: [A]n tuairim atá agam le formhór cruinnithe bord, má fheiceann tú in aon eagraíocht, ní hiad an bord a dhéanann na polasaithe, 'siad na stáitseirbhísigh, mar a déarfá, cuireann siad an polasaí os comhair an bord, deireann an bord "ó yeah, go breá". B'fhéidir go mbeidh athrú beag nó dhó ag athrú rudaí but de ghnáth leanann siad ar aghaidh . . . [M]á deireann an roinn [rialtais] ansin caithfidh tú seo a dhéanamh, caithfear é a dhéanamh.*

Relations between FnaG and the sector ultimately became so strained that by 2011 the North-South Ministerial Council was calling for professional mediation to occur between the two sides (Ó Murchú, 2014: 249).

In February 2012 the Irish media published an open letter by academics in the LPP field (both in Ireland and elsewhere) regarding the New Funding Model, claiming that the proposal was “completely at odds with international language planning principles” and destined to “prove detrimental to the development of Irish across the country”. The letter was also publicised as a public petition which gathered some 2,000 signatures within a few months (Activism.com, 2012; Ó Murchú, 2014: 254).

The contentious nature of the proposed model and the energy spent lobbying against it also, of course, meant that affected organisations had less time to perform their main duties regarding the promotion of the language. As one of my interviewees, a former employee of one of these organisations, said:

*D: Rinneamar ana-obair ansin nuair a bhí sé sin ag dul ar aghaidh, chuireamar litreacha agus rinneamar teagmháil le gach uile TD sna 26*

*contae. Éinne dúinn a bhí ag obair dúinn go lánaimseartha bhuaileamar le na TDs in ár ndáilcheantair féin agus y'know aon duine le cineál cumhachta polaitiúil. Bhí muid istigh i dTeach Laighean agus is dócha ar lámh amháin bhí daoine ag rá go mbeadh [eagraíocht s'aigesan] ceart go leor . . . go mbeadh siad roghnaithe. Ach ag an am céanna ní raibh 's ag duine ar bith agus . . . rinne sé dochar d'obair [na heagraíochta] ag an am sin mar níl acmhainní millteanach ag aon ghrúpa mar sin, grúpaí óige ach go háirithe. So bhíomar ag caitheamh céatadán mhaith dár gcuid ama ag socrú rudaí mar sin in áit ag díriú ar obair óige agus in áit ag díriú ar an obair a bhí i gceist againn a dhéanamh, bhí orainn bheith in ár bpolaiteoirí . . . [I]s cinnte go raibh deacrachtaí againn mar fhoireann ag déileáil leis seo. Agus tá 's agam na grúpaí agus na ceanneagraíochtaí eile gur cuireadh roinnt mhaith ama, ní amú an focal ceart, ach caitheadh roinnt mhaith ama ag socrú seo in áit ag díriú ar rudaí. Agus is muidne, bhíomar agus cúig ghrúpa eile, d'éirigh linn an stáid sin a bhaint amach. Bhí 19 eagrais a bhí ag déanamh [na stocaireachta] díreach céanna . . . Bhí go leor deacrachtaí agus chruthaigh sé teannas i measc na grúpaí, bhí sé ar nós an seanmhana cineál "divide and conquer" . . . [G]rúpaí ar nós Chomhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge a bhí ar siúl ó b'fhéidir na 40idí, just d'imigh siad. Is cinnte go ndearna an cheist maoiniú sin deacrachtaí.*

Several other interviewees who were involved in the process (including a disgruntled employee of FnaG itself) echoed this sentiment, feeling that these organisations expended an enormous amount of energy attempting to agree a compromise solution, only to find that FnaG was intent on implementing the New Funding Model regardless of the wishes of either the voluntary organisations or of the Irish-speaking community more generally.

Eventually, in January 2014 the six "lead organisations" FnaG would continue to fund were announced, namely *Gaelscoileanna*, *Gael Linn*, *Conradh na Gaeilge*, *Glór na nGael*, *Cumann na bhFiann* and *An tOireachtas*, with the remainder being disbanded come June of that year. As the above quote explains, even those employees whose organisations were maintained felt the process had been deeply flawed and showed a disregard for democratic procedure, language planning and management principles alike. It is thus unsurprising that the FnaG employee I interviewed told me that "*níl meas mada ag aon duine ar Fhoras na Gaeilge*".

Political lobbying and online petitions of the sort described above notwithstanding, fear of being disbanded and the divide and rule tactics

inherent in this rationalisation process seemingly prevented the sort of collective action that could have rendered the new funding proposals inoperable. With such action not forthcoming, the majority of the main Irish-language promotion organisations ceased to exist from June 2014.

While the organisations that were retained initially saw their budgets increased, this drawn-out and divisive rationalisation process was clearly far from conducive to language revitalisation, the stated aim of both FnaG and the sector it had aggravated so severely. The lack of consultation and refusal to engage with alternative proposals which characterised the affair is reminiscent of the democratic deficit which saw the government reject all 150 amendments proposed for the bill that became the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* (see 4.2.3), as well as many other schemes that were cut or reduced since the recession began (see 4.2.5 and 5.6.3.2 for further examples of such disregard for popular will). Section 4.2.9 discusses broader implications of the rationalisation of public sector bodies for language revitalisation efforts.

#### **4.2.7 Controversy surrounding the publication of the *Nuashonrú ar an Staidéar Cuimsitheach Teangeolaíoch ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht: 2006-2011***

The covert aspects of government policy are tellingly illustrated by the controversy surrounding the *Nuashonrú ar an Staidéar Cuimsitheach Teangeolaíoch ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht: 2006-2011* (henceforth “*Nuashonrú*”; Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a). In 2013 ÚnaG commissioned an update of the original CLS (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a), with the aim of providing an analytic basis for the language planning process laid out in the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*. The CLS was based on the results of the 2002 census and data from the 2003/4 *Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge*, as well as specially commissioned questionnaires and focus groups. The *Nuashonrú* referenced more recent census figures from 2006 and 2011, as well as data from *Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge* in corresponding years. It concluded that the prognosis presented in the CLS had been overly optimistic and that language shift was proceeding at an even faster rate than the 2007 study had predicted (Ó Giollagáin & Charlton, 2015a: 2). While the report does not reference the

economic crisis, in light of the findings presented in this and the following chapter, such a faster-than-expected rate of language shift post-2008 is unsurprising. Commenting on current language policy, it claimed that “[i]s ionann cloí le cleachtais reatha agus glacadh go praiticiúil le próiseas an dul i léig mionteanga sa Ghaeltacht” (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a: 11).

Although the authors submitted the completed report in April 2014, it was not published until May 2015. This delay was the result of both the DAHRRGA and subsequently ÚnaG objecting to the inclusion of recommendations from the authors in the report (Tuairisc.ie, 2015a). ÚnaG requested two further re-writings of the report, before deciding it was unwilling to publish it while it included the authors’ recommendations.

After several months of deadlock, a compromise was eventually reached whereby the main body of the report was published by ÚnaG (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a) and the authors’ recommendations were made available independently online (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015b; subsequently published in Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin, 2016: 107-12). While the commissioning body were adamant that the authors were charged with producing a statistical analysis and that the inclusion of policy recommendations exceeded their remit, as noted in the recommendations themselves, modern liberal states are often reluctant to be connected to proposals that are not in accordance with the requirements of the market (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015b: 9). As such ÚnaG’s decision is not, perhaps, overly surprising. The whole affair does, however, provide an illustration of the “master plan to do nothing” to which Fishman referred (see 1.4) and the covert policy agenda operating behind state rhetoric regarding the *20-Year Strategy* and similar policies.

One of the report’s authors, Ó Giollagáin, has stated that he views the behaviour of both the DAHRRGA and ÚnaG as an attempt at censoring conclusions which conflict with their position (Tuairisc.ie, 2017d). Such practices are far from unknown in Irish politics. A detailed report issued while the *Nuashonrú* controversy was ongoing described the various ways in which



the state uses threats to funding and other surreptitious tactics to regulate those things “which are best left unsaid” and control the work of groups involved in advocacy and research which conflicts with official state narratives (Harvey, 2014). Recent scandals in the police force showed such practices to exist across many levels of the public service (O’Toole, 2017).

One senior lobbyist from a language advocacy group explained ÚnaG’s decision to me as follows:

*M: Is é an roinn a chuir ina gcoinne nach ea, na moltaí, níor lorg an Údarás iad . . . [B]hí an roinn róbhuartha faoi bheith ceangailte le moltaí a bhí ag teacht ó na saineolaithe mar, I suppose, níl siad ag cur an Stráitéis 20 bliain na Gaeilge i bhfeidhm i gceart, níl siad ag cur na hacmhainní ar fáil don Acht Gaeltachta agus eile so is dócha go dtéann sé sin mar chuid den, mar chuid den chur chuige sin, yeah, an Ghaeilge a chur ar leataobh agus méid áirithe a dhéanamh ach gan mórán a dhéanamh.*

While it was the recommendations rather than the content of the report itself that were the main source of disputation, as an employee of the department responsible for the Gaeltacht told me: “[d]á mbeadh tusa an tAire a bhí freagrach as cúrsaí Gaeltachta an mbeifeá ag iarraidh an t-eolas sin a scaipeadh? I dunno!”

It may well, however, be the case that the minister then responsible for the Gaeltacht, Joe McHugh, or senior elements of the civil service hoped simply to delay the report’s findings long enough for them to move departments (as McHugh did in 2016) and not have to deal with the fallout from the report’s challenging findings, with the recommendations serving as a convenient excuse to delay publication. As one of my interviewees from a language promotion group observed “sin an rud faoin státseirbhís agus an rialtas go ginearálta, they play the long game”.

Further to the delay to its publication, as noted by Ó Giollagáin (2017), the policy implications of the *Nuashonrú* have been ignored in the years since its publication. No changes have been made to existing policies as a result of its findings, nor have additional resources been made available for extant policies

in light of the severe crisis it documented. While certainly creating the impression of a political elite ill-disposed to the language, as noted in 4.2.3, it is well established in the literature on public policy that states very commonly ignore expert advice about all manner of issues. Writing concomitantly to the *Nuashonrú's* publication – although about very different issues – two public policy academics noted that

The use of research evidence in policy-making in Ireland has only ever been irregular and inconsistent. One explanation for this is that the barriers to change, to the proper implementation of research findings, are many and considerable. Some are even justifiable. Financial constraints, geographic considerations or social values may act as legitimate breaks [sic] on the application of new insights. But it is also clear that lobbying from vested interests and political favouritism present equally serious barriers to good practice (Rouse and Duncan, 2015).

Indeed, in 2013 a review of twenty years of reports on one of the greatest turmoils to have faced Irish society since independence, that of institutional child abuse, concluded that while many recommendations had been implemented, “recommendation fatigue” meant that their effect on “policy and practice” was far from optimal (Buckley and Nolan, 2013). When an issue of such wide-spread concern as this struggles to produce the political action it deserves, it is unsurprising that Irish-language policy recommendations are also frequently neglected politically.

#### **4.2.8 Effects of the recession on Irish-language media**

Although the extent to which having their own media outlets benefits minoritised languages is still a source of debate (Browne, 1996: 169; Cormack, 2006, 2007; Fishman, 1991: 374-5), grassroots campaigns between the 1960s-90s consistently argued that Irish-language radio and television stations were necessary components of the revitalisation process. The campaigners' efforts eventually saw success – a radio station was established in 1972 and a television channel finally followed in 1996 (Watson, 2003). Most of the Irish-language media have provided employment which is located in the Gaeltacht and, in contrast to the majority of state-supported sectors situated therein, it is

explicitly language-based. Accordingly, this sphere of economic activity holds particular relevance for Irish-language use in the language's core communities, even in an era in which the dominance of such "legacy media" is being challenged by web-based news and entertainment platforms (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012).

As Watson recounts, the emergence of neoliberalism as Ireland's dominant economic paradigm has significantly influenced Irish-language media policy since the 1980s (2016: 73). Although Watson's account focuses on broadcast media, the effects of neoliberal reforms are also evident in print media in Irish, as 4.2.8.3 describes. As with other sectors described in this thesis, budgetary re-allocation between 2008-18 saw Irish-language media become subject to market forces to an ever-greater degree, with notable effects in terms of audience numbers and scheduling for broadcasting in Irish, as well as the range of print media available in the language.

#### **4.2.8.1 Raidió na Gaeltachta**

While FnaG funds local radio stations in Dublin, Belfast and Galway city, the only Irish-medium radio station broadcast across Ireland is, somewhat ironically, *Raidió na Gaeltachta* ("Radio of the Gaeltacht"; hereafter "RnaG"). The station's national audience share is only 0.7%, but it has a high level of audience penetration within the Gaeltacht: the most recent survey publicly available showed that it enjoyed a 45% share of listenership in the Gaeltacht in 2009 (RTÉ, 2009a; RTÉ, 2018a: 37). Similar to Scotland's *Radio nan Gàidheal*, it is key for publicising Gaeltacht affairs (Dunbar, 2003) and its importance to the Gaeltacht and the broader Irish-language community is widely accepted amongst Irish speakers. Prior to the station's founding, Irish was frequently perceived by its native speakers as a purely localised code not associated with life outside their immediate area (Watson, 2016: 69), but the establishment of RnaG is often understood as having been key to the "re-imagining" of the Gaeltacht as a unified community (cf. Anderson, 1991), fostering a sense of shared ownership of the language.

The station operates under the auspices of the state broadcaster RTÉ (“Raidió Telefís Éireann”) and has studios in the Galway, Donegal and Kerry Gaeltachtaí, with its headquarters in west Galway. As it would likely be difficult to attract significant income via advertising to its small audience, the station does not broadcast commercial advertising and is funded solely by the licence fee. As the secretary general of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources stated in 2013, however, the combination of the recession and rapid technological change caused a steep increase in incidences of non-payment of the licence fee post-2008. Court cases brought for non-payment doubled between 2008-13 (Oireachtas Éireann, 2013a: 5-7) and have stayed at this elevated level since (Irish Times, 2018b). Such evasion is a significant source of RTÉ’s financial difficulties (Indecon, 2016: 146; Oireachtas Éireann, 2017a: 14), with RnaG being affected accordingly.

Due to the decline in licence fee and advertising income for RTÉ as a whole, as well as cuts to direct state support, RTÉ’s Irish-language budget was reduced by 29% between 2008-12. With RnaG comprising the vast majority of RTÉ’s Irish-language expenditure, it absorbed the bulk of this reduction. The station’s funding fell from €15,063,000 in 2008 to €10,697,000 in 2012 (National Treasury Management Agency, 2014: 61, 73). By 2017 the station’s budget was €11,576,000 – still some 23% below the 2008 figure. Significantly, RTÉ’s overall budget for this time decreased by substantially less, by 8%, from €200,852,000 in 2008 to €186,068,000 in 2017 (RTÉ, 2009b: 52; 2018: 126).

These cuts served to compound what were already unequal conditions for RnaG staff, who receive lower pay than their English-language counterparts in other branches of RTÉ. An employee of the station discussed this issue with me in 2016:

*P: [N]íl ciall ar bith leis . . . an méid ganntanas foirne atá ann agus an méid atá le déanamh againn. But caithfidh tú glacadh leis. An dóigh go n-oibríonn muidinne, mar shampla tá mise ag obair ar chlár raidió laethúil agus tá mé ag léiriú agus ag láithriú liom féin. Níl duine ar bith eile, níl taighdeoir, níl léiritheoir, níl fuck all, right. Dá mbeadh sin in RTÉ bheadh b’fhéidir seisear, seachtar ag obair ar an chlár agus bheadh clár i bhfad níos mó acu . . . Seo pointe maith duit . . . tá fostaithe RTÉ Raidió*

*na Gaeltachta ina saoránaigh den darna grád taobh istigh den eagraíocht . . . Tá muid ar tuarastal i bhfad níos ísle, i bhfad níos ísle [le béim] ná achan duine atá ag déanamh an obair chéanna in RTÉ.*

*B: Agus cén leithscéal atá leis sin?*

*P: Níl leithscéal ar bith, it's just nár, nár...Y'know tá siad i gcónaí ag caint air, ag rá gur chóir dúinn é a throid, ach níor throid muid riamh é. Ba chóir dúinne cás a thabhairt go dtí fuckin...Ach níl muid á dhéanamh . . . Ba chóir dúinn an dlí a chur orthu, go dtí fuckin Eoraip, iad a fuckin súe-áil like. Ba chóir dúinn. But níl muid á dhéanamh . . . But b'fhéidir bhí eagla ar dhaoine, bhí cúlú eacnamaíochta ann agus ní raibh tú ag iarraidh tabhairt le fios "ó sin an dream sin ag cuartú airgead". Anyway, is pointe suimiúil é. Tá muid ag obair le níos lú acmhainní agus ar thuarastal níos lú.*

While not ultimately taking the issue any further, the National Union of Journalists did draw attention to these unequal conditions in July 2017, at a time when the gender pay gap in RTÉ was being widely discussed in the media:

The time has also come for RTÉ to address linguistic discrimination within the State broadcaster. Raidió na Gaeltachta is a national radio station providing a national service and there is no justification for the policy of paying RnaG journalists less than their colleagues based in Dublin (NUJ, 2017).

Several submissions to the Joint Committee on the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting for their 2017 report also referred to this issue (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017b: 122, 247).

Employment conditions which see those working in the Irish-language sector being paid less than people performing comparable work in other publicly funded organisations was something several other informants also addressed. As an interviewee with many years' experience working for Irish-language organisations told me

*D: [F]eicim sin go minic . . . de bharr go bhfuil tú ag obair leis an nGaeilge is léir go gcreidtear go bhfuil tú ag obair "ar son na cúise" . . . ní amharcann daoine ar – agus nuair a deirim daoine is údaráisí, rialtais, daoine cumhachtacha – ní amharcann siad ar Ghaeilge agus obair forbairt pobail mar obair cheart. Like ní fhaigheann daoine pá ceart i gcomhair jab, cé go bhfuil siad ag déanamh jab . . . Now tuigim . . . tá*

*muid ag déanamh na rudaí seo de bharr go dtaitníonn siad linn agus go bhfuil spéis faoi leith ach is ceart go mbeadh, y'know, an pá agus an t-aitheantas féaráilte is atá aon ghrúpa eile á bhfáilt. Ach feictear sin go minic, aon rud a bhaineann le forbairt pobail, Gaeilge nó Béarla, glactar leis go dtarlóidh sé, in áit aitheantas a thabhairt. Like má íocann tú daoine faigheann tú – nó bheifeá ag ceapadh go bhfaigheann tú – daoine níos fearr agus go mbeidh rath níos fearr ar an obair atá ar siúl.*

Similarly, until 2016 those employed in ÚnaG were also paid significantly less than others in the public service who perform comparable work through English (Tuairisc.ie, 2016b).

Figures made available in late 2017 showed daily listener numbers for RnaG had dropped by 40% since 2014, demonstrating the extent of the challenges faced by the station (Tuairisc.ie, 2017e). While audience share had increased from 2005-08, it then began to drop, with a National Treasury Management Agency report noting that this “may be attributable to the corresponding fall in opex [“operational expenditure”] during this period” (2014: 73). While it is difficult in the absence of detailed research on the matter to identify the exact causal factors behind this decrease, it would seem probable that it is at least partly the result of the budget cuts experienced by the station over the preceding years, just as the director of the Irish-language television station stated that that channel's declining viewership was a consequence of the cuts it received since 2008 (see following section). While research has not yet been conducted on the matter, it was recently claimed that the station's favouring of traditional Gaeltacht dialects – as opposed to the Irish of “new speakers” – may be a factor limiting its appeal (Moal, Ó Murchadha and Walsh, 2018: 196-7).

Reflecting on the greater numbers of music programmes and repeats broadcast on the station in recent years, one of my interviewees claimed these developments made her reluctant to listen to it:

*E: [C]heapfainnse ag an bpointe seo gur cur amú é RnaG. Níl ann ach cheapfainn, níl siad ag caint ach ar scéalta báis . . . Níl na cláracha ann mar a bhí . . . Níl ann ach cur isteach am anois, mar a déarfá, ar na cláracha.*

The significant reduction in daily Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht that was demonstrated in the 2016 census is another factor possibly contributing to the station's declining listenership. With there being over 2,500 less daily speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht in 2016 compared to 2011, as well as a drop in the number of daily speakers of Irish in the rest of the country, it is unsurprising that there was also a reduction in the numbers listening to the Gaeltacht radio station. Although the 40% decline in RnaG listeners is obviously much greater than the 11.2% decline in daily speakers in the Gaeltacht, this may partly reflect the fact that the station's listenership consists primarily of those in older age cohorts (Indecon, 2017: 12). As the oldest of these listeners die off it seems plausible that they are not being replaced by younger listeners, who are less likely to be active Irish speakers (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a), more likely to use online platforms for news and entertainment (see 5.10) and more likely to have emigrated since 2008 (5.5.1).

Unfortunately, in October 2016 due to financial constraints RTÉ withdrew a call for tender for research which aimed to gain a better understanding of RnaG's listenership (Tuairisc.ie, 2016c). This research would have aimed to address the *“easnamh mór a bhí ann go dtí seo nach raibh taighde cruinn againn maidir le lucht éisteachta RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta”* and hoped to allow the station to provide improved services to listeners (Tuairisc.ie, 2016d). Such an insight is undoubtedly needed, with the steep fluctuations in listenership undoubtedly being a cause for concern for a station that has been credited with being of great benefit to the language.

Despite RnaG clearly being in need of increased investment, in light of its reduced budget and the ongoing challenges faced by the traditional media, RTÉ began an organisation-wide rationalisation scheme in August 2017 that aims to cut costs and reduce staff numbers by approximately 10%. Under this scheme, RnaG staff were offered the opportunity to apply for redundancy and early retirement packages, for which a significant number applied, including half of the staff in the Donegal studio (Tuairisc.ie, 2017f). In light of the long-standing dissatisfaction with unequal working conditions experienced by those

employed in the station, it is perhaps unsurprising that such a large percentage desired to leave the station. Seven RnaG presenters were ultimately granted these packages, all of whom had been employed for over the 18-year minimum required to ensure eligibility. This prompted significant scheduling challenges for the station and led to the shortening or discontinuation of some of its key chat and news programmes, these often being the programmes in which the most spoken Irish was to be heard (Tuairisc.ie, 2018d).

#### **4.2.8.2 TG4**

Established in 1996 just as the Celtic Tiger was gaining momentum, TG4, the Irish-language television station, was perhaps *the* key victory secured by Irish-language campaigners during the boom period. The channel has more of a national focus than RnaG, and has often been noted for having had a significant status planning function for Irish on a national scale due to its presentation of the language as contemporary and vital (O’Connell et al., 2008). While having some vocal anti-Irish detractors in the media (Delap, 2008: 158) and also receiving criticism from some Irish speakers who bemoan the excessive use of English in its programming (Mac Síomóin, 2006: 3), the quality of its output is generally commended by both the Irish-speaking minority and the English-speaking majority (Irish Independent, 2015). While having a very low percentage share, as discussed below, as of 2016 it had some 450,000 daily viewers, with a 92% weekly reach amongst daily speakers of Irish (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017c: 10; TG4, 2018a: 1).

As well as employing eighty people directly, primarily in the station’s headquarters in Conamara, TG4 outsources much of its programming, spending €20m annually on contracts with over 90 production companies who employ some 350 people in total (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, 2013: 148; TG4, 2018b). This investment has allowed for the growth of an independent production sector, much of which is based in the Gaeltacht, and, in some cases, reported to have been important for maintaining a community’s use of Irish (Ní Bhrádaigh, 2008; TG4, 2016a: 22; Tuairisc.ie, 2017g).



One of my interviewees, who was himself involved in the campaign to have the station established, explained the beneficial social and linguistic consequences of the station as follows:

*S: [C]eann de na rudaí is mó cinnte a tharla sa gceantar le scór bliain anuas ná bunú TG4. Agus rinne sé sin difear an-mhór, níl aon dabht faoi sin. Now bunaíodh é sin tráth a raibh . . . borradh ag teacht faoin eacnamaíocht . . . [C]hoinnigh sé ag obair san áit go leor daoine an-, an-, b'fhéidir, chruthaitheach, ealaíonta, a bheadh imithe as an áit. Agus tá glúin áirid agus tá is dócha cúpla céad duine, abair, a coinníodh san áit nó a tugadh isteach san áit a bhfuil luí acu leis an nGaeilge. I mean tá sé sin tábhachtach, taobh amuigh den tionchar atá ag an telefís féin, tá sin tábhachtach ó thaobh an ceantar, mar a déarfá, mar cuid mhaith de na daoine sin tá cónaí orthub sa gceantar, tá siad ag tógáil clann anois faoin am seo, cuid mhaith acub. Chabhraigh sé sin go mór leis an gceantar agus thug sé stádas áiride don teanga freisin i measc lucht gnó sa gceantar. Thug mé sin faoi deara – lucht gnó, bhí siad ag athrú a ndearcadh féin ó thaobh na teanga. B'fhéidir go mbíodh siad cineál diúltach ó thaobh na teanga, gur thosaigh siad ag smaoineamh, bhuel, b'fhéidir . . . tá stádas ag an nGaeilge anois, stádas na teilifíse agus cheapfainn go raibh sin tábhachtach ó thaobh íomhá na teanga sa nGaeltacht féin.*

State funding of the broadcaster increased significantly from €10m in 2001 to €35.5m in 2008 (Irish Times, 2010; TG4, 2009: 43), although this was subsequently reduced in line with the recommendations of *An Bord Snip Nua* (see 4.2.1) to reduce the exchequer subvention of TG4 by €10m “at a minimum” (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 26). The cuts the station received, while significant, were nonetheless less than *An Bord Snip*’s proposal – a 2016 submission by TG4 to the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment noted that “funding ha[d] been reduced by over €3m per annum” between 2008-15 (TG4, 2016b: 2), falling from €35,473,000 to €32,240,000 (TG4, 2009: 42, 2016b: 30). When added, however, to “new levies and reductions in commercial income due to the downturn in the economy these have resulted in an almost €6m reduction in funds available for TG4’s operations on an annual basis” (TG4, 2016b: 2). This submission requested that the recommendations of various independent economic advisors be implemented and their budget increased “at the very least [to] €32.75m (TG4’s current public funding for years 2011 to 2014 inclusive)”. They

also noted that “[t]he combination of the downturn and media market developments have resulted in TG4's advertising and sponsorship income declining by approximately 50% between 2008 and 2016” (TG4, 2016b: 3-4; see also Ó Gairbhí, 2017: 278-297).

While perhaps not giving due accord to the decline of legacy media that is occurring regardless of budgetary contraction, according to the channel's director inadequate funding was the primary cause of the fall in the channel's audience share from 3.2% in 2005 to 1.8% in 2016 (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017c: 16-7). Similarly, an independent 2016 report stated that “an increase in funding is required if its audience share is not to continue on its downward trend” (Indecon, 2016: ix). The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland also told the Oireachtas that the channel would be unable to deal with further cuts, it already being run on an extremely frugal basis (TG4, 2016b: 4; Ó Gairbhí, 2017: 285). In light of the aforementioned status-raising function of the channel, such a significant decline in viewership is surely unhelpful for the language's prestige both in the Gaeltacht and nationally. Despite numerous such appeals for the channel's budget to be increased to at least 2014 levels, by 2017 funding was €32.79m, €147,000 below the 2014 figure, which itself was over €3m less than the 2008 budget (TG4.ie, 2018).

Under the *Broadcasting Act, 2009* the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (under whose direction TG4 is run) is required to “promote and stimulate the development of Irish language programming and broadcasting services” (Government of Ireland, 2009: 33). Also included in this act is a requirement for the minister of communications to develop “broadcasting funding schemes” aiming, amongst other objectives, to “develop . . . programmes in the Irish language” (Government of Ireland, 2009: 156-7). These schemes are to be funded by “an increase in the allocation of licence fee money from RTÉ to the Broadcasting Funding Scheme (from 5% to 7%), of which TG4 is a main beneficiary”, in order to increase the quantity and quality of Irish-language broadcasting (Government of Ireland, 2010: 27). Despite this positive legislative development, however, the 2008-18 period saw the funding of this

scheme become significantly more challenging. As explained in 4.2.8.1, the paying of licence fees dropped significantly after 2008, due to both the recession and the increasing turn away from traditional media.

While the station continues to promote Irish in so far as it can, it would seem probable that its reduced budget and the consequent decline in ratings was responsible for some of the recent scheduling decisions which saw a decrease in the number of programmes directed at the station's "core" Irish-speaking viewers. Major changes were made to the station's schedule in 2017, with programmes such as *Comhrá*, *Béaloidas Beo* and *Róisín* being discontinued – all of which had formats based primarily on interviewing native Irish speakers. In their place there was an increase in programmes in which relatively little Irish is heard, such as those focusing on music like *Glór Tíre*, a talent show for up-and-coming singers from around the country, few of them Irish speakers. Sports coverage was also increased, it being seen as "a good attraction for non-Irish audiences and maintaining audience shares" (Indecon, 2016: 30; see also Ó Gairbhí, 2017: 309-10). The station also broadcasts a large number of repeats or imported filler programming such as English-language quiz or "reality" TV shows. Even before these recent scheduling changes took place, Indecon's 2016 review of TG4's funding noted that "[t]here has been a slight decrease in Irish language hours broadcast across 2013-2015", falling from 5,188 hours in 2013 to 4,956 (57% of its total broadcast hours) in 2015 (2016: 34). Despite being well received by critics, the 2017 drama series *Klondike* was notable for its high degree of bilingualism, perhaps imitating a Welsh model that aims to appeal to Welsh and non-Welsh speakers alike (Tuairisc.ie, 2017h; see also Mac Dubhghaill, 2008).

Although the employment created by TG4 is obviously of great importance, much of this is itself problematic – not least due to a large amount of it being conducted through English, leading to the creation of the sort of "Potemkin village" that McLeod (2002: 68) warned against as being an unhelpful false illusion of language revitalisation. As an interviewee who lives near TG4 told me:

*C: [B]’fhéidir go bhfuil lochtanna ar TG4, agus tá, ach tá go leor like comhlachtaí eile héis teacht chun cinn mar gheall ar TG4. Comhlachtaí príobháideacha a bhíonn ag déanamh scannánaíocht iad féin . . . agus ó thaobh fostaíochta de tá sé sin maith. Ach an rud faoi, mar a déarfá, ní postanna buan iad . . . Agus is trí Bhéarla a bheadh a bhformhór.*

Several other interviewees also noted the tendency of those employed in TG4 to speak English at work, something not reported to be the case with RnaG or the print media discussed in the following section. This same informant claimed this was due to TG4’s employees lacking the ideological commitment to the language that those involved in the founding of RnaG had:

*C: Ach bhí locht mór ar TG4 go raibh an dream a bhí ag obair ann ag Béarlóireacht. Now, ní raibh chuile dhuine . . . [I]s cuimhneach liom goil isteach in oifig agus Béarla ar fad a bhí á labhairt ann . . . Sin rud nár tharla le Raidió na Gaeltachta. Y’see sin mar gheall go raibh an dream an-dáiríre, gur throid siad ar son Raidió na Gaeltachta a fháil, gur throid siad ar son na Gaeilge agus lucht TG4 ní raibh ann ach post dóibh. Sin an difríocht, post a bhí ann agus ba chuma leob. Ní rabhadar féin cinnte. Níl mé ag rá nach bhfuil daoine áiride i TG4 – bhí agus tá – a raibh dílseacht faoi leith acu don Ghaeilge, tá sé sin fíor. Ach bhí lucht oifige Raidió na Gaeltachta chomh dílis don Ghaeilge is a bhí na craoltóirí. Ní raibh sé sin amhlaidh i TG4. Cé ar a bhí an locht sin, ar fostaíodh an dream mí-cheart? Níl ’s a’m.*

Notwithstanding this interviewee’s contention that those employed by TG4 who frequently spoke English were capable of speaking Irish but chose not to, it is often the case that those involved in the technical aspects of TG4’s productions simply do not know Irish, with many of these working for independent companies contracted by the station, including large numbers of camera operators (Ó Gairbhí, 2017: 332-4). A direct employee of the station told me that it is for this reason that Irish is used only about 50% of the time on the set of one of the station’s flagship shows. Indeed, during the course of this PhD I had numerous occasions to be on TG4 myself, and in all but one instance I was filmed by a cameraman unable to speak Irish, assisted by a reporter who talked to me in Irish before turning to the cameraman and repeating the substance of our conversation in English.

With this being a longstanding issue, before the crash ÚnaG funded a higher diploma in “broadcasting and television and radio journalism” taught by

*Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge* (the Irish-language division of the National University of Ireland, Galway), aiming to rectify the lack of Irish-speaking workers with such skills. This course was delivered near the TG4 and RnaG headquarters in west Galway where work placements were available to students, but budgetary cuts have since led to ÚnaG discontinuing the paying of tuition fees for the course. Indeed, grants provided by ÚnaG for training and education were reduced massively between 2008-15, from €12,766,480 to €1,582,030 (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2009b: 3; 2016b: 3).

Although the Acadamh continues to teach similar courses, they are now fully fee charging and include fewer opportunities for work experience than are thought necessary, developments which have surely not helped resolve this shortage of Irish-speaking staff in TG4 (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017b: 143). Furthermore, between 2012-18 full-time student numbers in the Acadamh's Gaeltacht centres fell by over 90%, from 248 to 20, with the 50% reduction in the institution's budget since 2008 and the abolition of the grant formerly paid to students studying in the Gaeltacht adding to the difficulties caused by the discontinuation of ÚnaG support (RTÉ, 2018b).

Further to the obviously problematic issue of language use by both TG4 staff and the station's contractors, one of my interviewees, a man in his mid-20s who composes music used by TG4, told me of his frustration with the poor employment conditions he faces in the sector:

*F: [C]júpla lá ó shin chuir mé isteach ar obair, rud neacht a gheobhaim íocaíocht thart ar míle euro fána choinne. Agus dúirt siad liom, bhuel, internship atá anseo, like comhlacht atá ag iarraidh stuif a dhéanamh do TG4. So gan mise a bheith in ann taighde [tuarastal a bhí i gceist aige sílim] mar is ceart a fháil bhí siad ag iarraidh bullshit a íoc domh, €20 extra ar an dól, right. Agus ní hé go bhfuil mise just mar amateur, tá mé literally, chuaigh mise chuig an ollscoil, NUI, NUI fuckin Acadamh agus chuir mé lear obair isteach ann. So fá choinne duine atá [cáilithe] tá siad ag ráit domh, y'know, "fuck off". Agus tá siadsan chun mo obair a úsáid chun fuckin lear airgead a dhéanamh. So tá just fadhbanna ansin.*

In light of the reduced income such companies receive from TG4 due to cuts to the station's budget, it is of little surprise they – like so many other sectors

– have adopted such internships as a way to lower overheads. The cuts have meant that TG4 pays these independent companies just 50% of the amount RTÉ pays its contractors, with employment in the sector falling accordingly (see consultation submissions from such contractors in Oireachtas Éireann, 2017b: 70, 123, 161, 167, 247; also Olsberg SPI and Nordicity, 2017: 64; Mac Murchú, 2008; Mac Eachmharchaigh, 2008; Ó Gairbhí, 2017: 329-31). As several other interviewees observed, frustration with employment conditions of this nature often prompts people to emigrate, or at least to seek employment in sectors unrelated to Irish (see also Glynn et al., 2013: 41-3; Oireachtas Éireann, 2017b: 247).

For all TG4's continued popularity amongst many Irish speakers (TG4, 2018a: 1), the last ten years have clearly seen it face very significant challenges. As with Irish-medium radio and print media, not only has the station had to contend with the rapidly changing nature of traditional media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also with significant reductions to its budget. As the station's director recently told an Oireachtas committee:

*[n]í leor an leibhéal reatha maoinithe le gur féidir le TG4 dul i ngleic leis an margadh atá ag síor-fhorbairt agus athrú. Gan bonn il-bhliana faoin maoiniú, is doiligh pleanáil agus forbairt [a dhéanamh] (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017d: 3).*

He also noted that without significant investment over the next several years the station risks becoming lost in the “digital jungle”, one of the 750+ channels available to the Irish public that attract less than 1% of viewers. Similar sentiments were expressed in the channel's 2018 strategy document, which noted that “the recession caused major damage, not just to TG4, but also to Ireland's creative economy” and that globalisation and the competition for audiences it brings has left the channel in great need of increased investment (TG4, 2018a: 2). In July 2018, however, the government finally announced that a most welcome additional €985,000 in funding was being made available for 2018. Although it is unclear whether this increase will also be available in coming years, it will hopefully go some way to preventing further attrition of TG4's viewership and undo some of the damage caused by the recession. As

with RnaG, in light of the many benefits the station has provided the language, any further decline in its status would surely be an enormous loss to Irish speakers in both the Gaeltacht and Galltacht.

#### **4.2.8.3 Print media**

Unusually for a minoritised language of its size, print media in Irish has a relatively well-established history, with the first Irish-language periodical, *An Gaodhal*, being printed monthly from 1881-1904 (Delap, 2008: 153). Published bilingually by an Irish emigrant in New York, this publication was succeeded by more frequently published, all-Irish newspapers such as *Fáinne an Lae* and *An tÉireannach*, amongst many more. A highpoint for Irish-language print media was reached in the 1950s when *Inniu* was selling 20,000 copies a day (Foras na Gaeilge, 2013: 1).

Despite having had over a century for the market to mature, by 2008 all extant publications in Irish were in receipt of significant state support. In line with their wider process of rationalisation which saw them abolish 13 of 19 voluntary Irish-language organisations (see 4.2.6), FnaG also greatly reduced the amount of print media it funded. The extent to which these media were dependent on official subvention is clearly seen in the fact that all of those which did not secure alternative funding arrangements became defunct once their grants were discontinued.

In 2007, a daily paper called *Lá Nua* was founded as a successor to *Lá*, which had been in publication from 1984-2006. Although based primarily in Belfast, the paper also had an office in the Donegal Gaeltacht. It operated on a not-for-profit basis and was controlled by the *Preas an Phobail* co-operative (Ó Murchú, 2008: 17). While partly financed by shareholder investors drawn primarily from Belfast's Irish-speaking community, the paper received the majority of its funding from FnaG. As with its predecessor (whose average daily sales reached 4,404 during the second half of 2003), five editions of *Lá Nua* were published each week, although by 2008 daily sales averaged only 1,500 copies, leading FnaG to withdraw funding for the paper in 2009 (Ó Murchú, 2014: 464).

The case of *Foinse*, a Conamara-based weekly paper founded in 1996, is similar to that of *Lá Nua*. *Foinse* saw sales reach 8,000 copies a week by the year 2000, only for them to decline to 3,746 by the end of 2008 (Ó Murchú, 2014: 464). As with *Lá Nua*, FnaG ceased funding *Foinse* in 2009. Further to the general trend towards falling newspaper reading in any language, such a steady decline in sales has also been observed with Welsh-language newspapers, as readers apparently no longer see the novelty in minority language newsprint and tire of supporting an enterprise *ar son na cúise* (“for the cause”; Ó Murchú, 2014: 464). Again, in the wake of the budget cuts that FnaG faced from 2008 onwards and with sales having fallen so significantly, it is unsurprising that the organisation ceased subsidising these papers. Although it must be acknowledged that such defunding may well have occurred regardless of the events of 2008, the economic climate certainly made them all the more likely. Despite losing its core funding, beginning in 2009 a shorter version of *Foinse* was published privately as a weekly supplement in the *Irish Independent* (Gaelport.com, 2011). The content of this iteration of the paper quickly came to focus on learners rather than fluent speakers, however, and the paper went online only in late-2013, before ceasing operations in 2015. The *Irish Independent* continues to publish a short weekly supplement in Irish, *Seachtain*, focusing primarily on the needs of learners and school students.

Having defunded both *Foinse* and *Lá Nua*, FnaG issued a call for tender in 2009 to establish a replacement publication under its *Scéim Nuachtán Seachtainiúil* (“Weekly Newspaper Scheme”). It eventually opted to fund *Gaelscéal*, whose first issue was published in January 2010. Although the paper was widely commended for its coverage of national and international affairs, in addition to its analysis of Irish-language issues, its weekly sales never surpassed 1,500 copies, and had fallen to 1,300 by the time the paper’s €400,000 annual subsidy was withdrawn in early 2013 (Gaelport.com, 2013). This decision to end *Gaelscéal*’s funding was taken on the grounds that these low sales did not warrant such expenditure in light of “*an titim de 25% atá i ndiaidh teacht ar bhuiséad Foras [sic] na Gaeilge le cúig bliana anuas, mar*



*aon le gearradh substaintiúil eile tuartha don bhliain seo chugainn”* (Foras na Gaeilge, 2013: 1-2).

Similar to the cases of RnaG and TG4 discussed in the previous sections, *Lá Nua*, *Foinse* and *Gaeilscéal* all provided important language-based employment in the Gaeltacht, albeit on a smaller scale. While only employing small numbers of staff, *Foinse* and *Gaeilscéal* each had their offices within ten miles of both the RnaG and TG4 headquarters, thereby contributing to maintaining the social density of Irish speakers and creating high-prestige employment, both essential ingredients for language maintenance in any community.

The cuts to these newspapers were made despite a commitment in the *20-Year Strategy* to encourage the growth of print media in Irish, with one of my interviewees commenting as follows when describing the state’s general neglect of the *Strategy*:

*S: [B]hí sé ráite go soiléir . . . gurb é ceann de na rudaí a bhí i gceist ag an Stratéis ná iarracht a dhéanamh cur leis an méid ábhar clóite a bheadh á leanh sa nGaeilge. Agus céard a tharla? Cuireadh deireadh leis an bpáipéar, an nuachtán clóite!*

Although it does commit to promoting Irish-language publications, the *Strategy* also stipulates that print media will be supported on the basis of “reasonable and verifiable sales” (Government of Ireland, 2010: 26). Such a sentiment accords with the rationalisation rhetoric so common in light of the economic crisis and wider neoliberal reform, running counter to economic intervention principles popular before the neoliberal era, whereby states readily supported loss-making public institutions due to the wider benefits they provided (Chomsky, in Bakan, 2005: 194; Chang, 2007: 114).

A number of smaller-scale news services also ceased publication during the period this thesis focuses on. Among these were *Goitse* (which was published independent of state support in and for the Donegal Gaeltacht between 2009-11), Foras na Gaeilge’s monthly news bulletin *Saol* (which had been in

existence for 25 years) and *Nuacht24*, a short-lived successor to *Lá Nua* in Belfast which was also self-financed (Ó Murchú, 2014: 458).

In a further blow to the language's status in the print media, as well as its visibility on a national scale, the *Irish Times*, Ireland's main broadsheet and paper of record, reduced its Irish-language content from one full page weekly to a half page in July 2016. This decision was taken as part of a wider re-organisation of the paper whereby it reduced its total page content in an attempt to maintain profitability despite steadily declining circulation. The development was criticised by many in the Irish-language media, who observed that it halved the opportunities for Irish-language journalists to be employed by the paper, which is notable for the above-average rates of remuneration its writers receive (Tuairisc.ie, 2016e).

As well as the discontinuation of Irish-language newspapers, other print media and online news services previously funded by FnaG were also cut. Until June 2014 the periodicals *Feasta*, *An tUltach*, *An Timire*, *An Sagart* and *Nós* were all in receipt of funding, as were the news websites Gaelpport.com, Saol.ie and Beo.ie. By 2015, however, cutbacks meant that FnaG was only supporting the monthly literary journal *Comhar*, the newly founded online news service Tuairisc.ie (discussed below) and the now online-only culture magazine *Nós*, which had previously been available both online and as a quarterly printed magazine (Ó Murchú, 2014: 458). Although *An tUltach* had its funding discontinued, this deficit has been compensated for by Conradh na Gaeilge's decision to finance it from their own internal budget, with the organisation having been reluctant to see an end to a magazine which has been in publication since 1924.

In mid-2018 the book publisher *Cois Life* announced its intention to close come 2019, citing amongst other reasons the decline in sales that the recession had seen (Cois Life, 2018). Commenting on this news, the CEO of FnaG stated that funding for their Irish-language books scheme had fallen by over €700,000 between 2008-17, from €1.8 to €1.06m (Tuairisc.ie, 2018e), a development which exacerbated what was already a challenging publishing climate.

With traditional media in decline the world over due to the growth of the internet, it cannot be argued that the Great Recession is wholly responsible for the decline of print media in Irish. Similar to the cases of RnaG and TG4 discussed above, however, the coinciding of the crisis with the broader challenges faced by legacy media created a deeply unfavourable situation for Irish-language publications after 2008. The lack of disposable income experienced by the majority of the population during the recession made it all the less likely people would regularly buy such publications purely to support the language. When combined with the straitened budgetary circumstances FnaG experienced in recent years which required them to rationalise operations to a degree unlikely to have otherwise occurred, it is unsurprising that the period under examination saw such a large reduction in the range of print media available in Irish.

While the decrease in the availability of print media in Irish is notable, it has to a large degree been compensated for by the growth of vibrant online Irish-language media, all of which are provided free of charge. *Gae/scéal* has been succeeded by popular news service Tuairisc.ie, which attracted a very significant 250,000 users in 2016 after receiving a four-year long grant of €1.6m (Foras Teanga, 2017: 24). *Nós* continues to be widely read in its online form, attracting 128,000 readers in 2016 (Foras Teanga, 2017: 24). There are also a number of smaller content providers such as Ulster-focused news site Meoneile.ie or portal site Peig.ie. These are certainly very positive developments that continue to provide language-based employment while reaching a far wider readership than the print publications discussed. It is notable, however that only one of these sites, Tuairisc.ie, has its office in the Gaeltacht, and, unlike *Gae/scéal*, *Foinse*, etc., even this is located in an area where Irish is very weak, less than five miles from Galway city centre. Furthermore, as discussed in section 5.10, the increased penetration of information technology into our daily lives is itself somewhat of a double-edged sword for minoritised languages, offering great opportunities, but also significant challenges.

#### 4.2.9 New Public Management: Irish in the public service

Despite having been one of the main foci of the language revitalisation efforts of the Free State, the use of Irish in the public service has long since been a source of much contention. Senior civil servants who had been employed in the British administration resisted attempts to Gaelicise their departments after independence (Ó hIfearnáin, 2010: 547), leading Ernest Blythe, a Conradh na Gaeilge member and early Free State minister, to declare that “[i]f civil servants assemble . . . in great numbers in the Gaeltacht, they should be dispersed, if necessary, by machine guns” (in Kelly, 2002: 105).

This tension exists to this day: a common discourse amongst the Irish-speaking community claims that a significant element within the public service are “opposed” to Irish. Such narratives feature frequently in both media and academic commentary (e.g. Thejournal.ie, 2013a; Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 102) and, indeed, the President of Ireland himself expressed concerns in 2016 that there was a “*fadhb chultúrtha éigean ag cur srian ar an gcóras*” (Tuairisc.ie, 2016f; see also Tuairisc.ie, 2016g). This belief has been significantly strengthened by the reports and public declarations of both the current Coimisinéir Teanga and his predecessor. The first Coimisinéir, Seán Ó Cuirreáin, served from 2004 until 2014, when he unexpectedly resigned his position in protest at the widespread non-implementation of both the *20-Year Strategy* and the language schemes required of public bodies under the *Official Languages Act 2003*. While Ó Cuirreáin himself, as will be seen, offered a more nuanced analysis than is often assumed, his successor has also expressed similar frustrations on numerous occasions (e.g. Oireachtas Éireann, 2016).

Several of my interviewees voiced such reservations, charging public servants with antipathy towards official language policies, as seen in the following quotes:

*B: Níl mé ag iarraidh cur síos ar aon duine, but muna bhfuil an rialtas sásta govern – ‘cause again stáitseirbhíseach, cushy fuckin number, on your fuckin flexitime, déan an rud céanna, nó níos measa fós [dá*

*mbeadh ort] cur isteach ar do chomhghleacaithe ‘cause my minister wants this so sorry, you’re gonna have to get off your fuckin arse [agus scéim teanga a chur i bhfeidhm].*

*A: Tá cumhacht thar na bearta ag na státseirbhísigh sin. Agus cuid mhaith den am ní bhíonn na hAirí rialtais nó cibé polaiteoir atá i bhfeighil ar an réimse sin sásta dul i ngleic leis ná dul in éadán moltaí nó tuairimí an státseirbhís . . . An dóigh a fheicim é ó thaobh an státseirbhís go bhfuil an cultúr ann faoi láthair gur cineál inconvenience atá sa Ghaeilg.*

Given the historical evidence that shows civil service obstruction of language revitalisation measures was widespread in the Free State, there is likely an element of truth to these beliefs (Ó hIfearnáin, 2010: 547-9). Here, however, I aim to propose an alternative explanation for the steady decrease in compliance in recent years with the language schemes required of public bodies, detailed by the Coimisinéir Teanga in successive reports (e.g. Coimisinéir Teanga, 2012; 2014; 2015). In opposition to the individualist explanation heard so often in popular discourse, I believe that a strong case can be made that this marginalisation of Irish is to a significant degree a product of the neoliberal managerial reforms that began in the 1970s, gathered pace in the 1990s and have become even more widespread since the 2008 crash.

This common belief that large numbers of Machiavellian public servants are “anti-Irish” and therefore operate to render state language policy ineffective for their own ends is, I believe, an overly simplistic explanation, unlikely to be the main reason for the recent marginalisation of Irish in the public service. This is not least due to the fact that all available data suggests that the majority of the population are sympathetic towards Irish (e.g. Mac Gréil and Rhatigan, 2009; Conradh na Gaeilge, 2015) and there is no obvious reason why this would not be at least broadly replicated amongst public servants, much less why it would have become a significantly more severe problem in recent years. Although, as Ó hIfearnáin notes, it is easy to express pro-Irish sentiments when you are not required to act on them in any way (2010: 547), a senior member in the office of the Coimisinéir Teanga told me that they do not generally find such officials to have the anti-Irish views often ascribed to them:

*B: An bhfuil an státseirbhís chomh naimhdeach sin in aghaidh na Gaeilge is a shíleannas go leor de phobal na Gaeilge? Agus tú ag plé leofa an bhfaigheann tú an dearcadh sin?*

*G: Ní fhaighim. Feictear dom go mbraitheann go leor . . . go bhfuil rudaí suntasacha eile le bheith ag plé leob seachas an cheist seo. Éinne a labhraim leob agus cinnte agus mise ag labhairt leob trasna an bhoird bíonn siad ag rá liom go bhfuil meas acub ar an nGaeilge, go bhfuil cion acub ar an nGaeilge, so ní fhéadfainn sin a bhréagnú, má tá duine ag rá liom go bhfuil meas acub ar an nGaeilge. But ó thaobh céard atá an státseirbhís goil a dhéanamh ar son na Gaeilge, nuair a thagann sé go legislatively what are you going to do, cineál, agus ‘sé sin céard atá tú ag gealladh sa scéim teanga – so tá meas agat ar an nGaeilge, céard atá sa scéim teanga mar sin? Agus nuair a fheiceann muid na gealltanais atá á comhlíonadh, nó easpa gealltanais . . . is ansin atá an laigeacht le feiceáil. Now cén fáth a bhfuil sé sin ag tarlú? Aríst I dunno. Y’know it’s really, like it’s really, it’s ceist, I suppose, ceannaireachta really.*

It would appear clear from this experience, then, that the narrative of a large number of public administrators being opposed to Irish is indeed overly simplistic, with them instead seemingly having at least the passive goodwill towards the language that is typical of the Irish population. As will be seen, however, in the absence of a suitably supportive workplace environment, this banal positivity is insufficient to see significant efforts made towards language promotion.

As noted in 1.4, in 1974 the Fine Gael-Labour coalition government discontinued the Irish-language requirement for entry to the civil service. While factors such as the rise of the anti-compulsory-Irish *Language Freedom Movement* surely contributed to this decision (Rowland, 2016), it is also of note that this move was made the year after Ireland joined the EEC and thereby came under the influence of international political and economic practices to a much greater degree than had previously been the case (Ó Tuathaigh, 2008: 33). Furthermore, the early 1970s was a time of immense economic turmoil on a global scale, the stagflation crisis of this period being the first generalised crisis of capitalism to occur since the Great Depression (Gamble, 2009: 6). As a result of this crisis and the neoliberal policies adopted to overcome it, by the

late 70s states all across the developed west were beginning to undertake fundamental reforms of their public services.

These “New Public Management” (NPM) reforms saw states endeavour to bring the logic of marketization and the practices of the private sector to bear on public sector institutions (Cairney, 2012: 12). NPM drew in particular on the ideas of game theory and public choice theory which were cornerstones of neoliberal policy (Blyth, 2013: 152-60), applying to the political sphere economic models of self-centred individuals eternally attempting to maximise their personal benefit. With politicians perpetually compelled to maximise votes, public choice theorists claimed they would invariably implement unwise economic interventions in the hope of appeasing the electorate in the short term, with the inevitable result of generating inflation, which neoliberalism had sought to overcome (Cairney, 2012: 152; Blyth, 2013: 152-8). Similarly, without an appropriate incentive structure, public servants would continually seek to minimise their workloads and place personal benefit above public good, leading to the sort of inefficiencies that NPM aimed to address (Niskanen, 1971).

NPM quickly gained popularity amongst policy makers, becoming “[o]ne of the key policy changes institutionalized across the Western world” in recent decades (Lynch, 2012: 89). In this context, it is of little surprise that the Fianna Fáil government who won a landslide victory in 1977 did not see fit to re-instate the language requirement for civil service recruitment, despite having promised to do so should they regain power (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 170). When combined with developments in public attitudes and the failure of the efforts of previous decades, the withdrawal of state commitment to Gaelicising the public service at this juncture appears to have been overdetermined by a confluence of factors both endogenous and exogenous to Irish society.

Ostensibly, the New Public Management model aims to increase the efficiency of the public sector. This is done through introducing challenging performance indicators designed to incentivise productivity (with continued employment often being dependent on meeting such targets), introducing “quasi-markets”

or “market-type mechanisms” and interdepartmental competition to secure resources, reframing citizens as customers or “service users”, and an increased reliance on outsourcing (Homburg et al., 2007: 4-5; Cairney, 2012: 158-9).

Despite its measures being promoted as a practical application of market logic, allowing for the “depoliticizing” of management practices, NPM is not simply a set of proposals for enhancing the efficiency of the increasingly large and complex bureaucracies that were required to manage capitalism under the post-war Keynesian consensus. Rather, as Lynch (2012: 89) points out, NPM is fundamentally a “management strategy for neoliberalism”, being a key way in which neoliberal reforms have been enacted in “not just the political economy of states but the public institutions where people received services and worked” (Ward, 2011: 206).

It is therefore unsurprising that a state which neoliberalised as thoroughly as Ireland would have adopted NPM measures to a significant degree. An OECD report published on the eve of the crash in 2008 confirmed this to be the case, stating “Ireland has significantly advanced along a *“New Public Management”* continuum” (OECD, 2008: 18, original emphasis). As will be shown, the reform measures implemented in the years following this pronouncement saw Ireland move yet further along this continuum, thereby creating, I believe, an environment inhospitable to the promotion of Irish in the public sector.

With “doing more with less” having been a central demand of NPM since its earliest years (Ward, 2011: 207), this approach gained even greater prominence in the wake of the 2008 crash, with far-reaching reforms being implemented across the Irish public service. As MacCarthaigh explains:

Adopting a ‘never waste a crisis’ approach . . . a wide range of reform measures . . . left no part of the public service unaffected . . . the 2011-16 period became one of unprecedented change for the Irish public service. The window of opportunity presented by the crisis was exploited by policy entrepreneurs from the political and administrative domains to implement major reform efforts in parallel (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 161).



Similarly, Boyle has argued that “[a]usterity has caused major change in the public service”, with these measures amounting to “the biggest change to [Ireland’s] public services since the foundation of the state” (2017: 226). As Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) and Randma-Liiv and Kickert (2017) describe, major public service reforms were intensified not only in Ireland but across much of Europe after 2008, particularly in those countries effected most severely by the crisis.

Guiding these reforms in Ireland was the 2011 *Public Service Reform Plan*. This plan contained a host of targets aimed at reducing state expenditure, including a 12% reduction of public service staff numbers by 37,500 to 282,500 by 2015 (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 157). While this goal was not fully achieved, there was nonetheless a reduction of almost 10% during this period. As a senior member in the office of the Coimisinéir Teanga (which lost several employees due to such measures) told me when speaking about this time “*bhí gach duine hanging on for dear life really, ó thaobh foirne*”.

One ÚnaG employee I interviewed noted that although they had significant impacts for Irish, these measures impacted the entire public service:

*É: [B]aineann sé le achan earnáil . . . Cur chuige nua a bhí ag an stát. Cur chuige nua atá ilnáisiúnta ar dhóigh . . . thoisigh Fianna Fáil é seo. Lean Fine Gael dó. Dúirt siad linne nach ndéanfadh siad é but lean siad dó, cos ar chos. Agus go minic fóireann sé do dhaoine atá i gceannas, cosúil le na daoine atá i gceannas ar roinn an rialtais agus tá siad ábalta smacht níos fearr a choinneáil ar rudaí . . . leis an rud “seo an méid atá agat le caitheamh don bhliain, seo an méid atá agat, caithfidh tú é a dhéanamh” . . . Ní shílím go mbaineann seo le Gaeilge amháin. Shíl mé sin go dtí gur thoisigh mé ag caint le daoine i rannóga rialtais eile, mar shampla páirceanna náisiúnta, córas oideachais, FÁS nó traenáil – rudaí céanna atá ann. Sílim gur sin rud a thiteann muid i gcónaí isteach ann, go bhfuil muid istigh sa súilín seo, bubble na Gaeilge, agus síleann muid go bhfuil achan rud...*

*B: In ár n-aghaidh.*

*É: Yeah.*

Further intensifying the implementation of NPM measures, in 2013 the Department of Finance, on the basis of their negotiations with the Troika,

oversaw the creation of a new system of measuring productivity. Under this system, all state departments are obliged to produce regular performance reports in order to improve “alignment of decisions on spending with policy outcomes” (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 155). As a result of these and many other similar reforms

Irish public service managers reported a stronger deterioration with regard to citizen trust in government, the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer and staff motivation when compared with other states in the 2008-2014 period (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 161).

At the time of writing the government was continuing to entrench NPM in the public service, “seeking major new productivity concessions”, including the outsourcing/privatising of yet further functions, biometric clock-in requirements, mandatory unpaid overtime, and potentially making Saturday a standard working day (Irish Times, 2017c; 2017d).

In the wake of such reforms, the Coimisinéir Teanga found that by 31 December 2016, of 113 public bodies with language schemes (see 1.5), 56 had let their scheme expire, with six expired for seven or more years (Coimisinéir Teanga, 2017b: 3). Following a notable peak in the number of schemes that were lapsed between 2011-13 (Coimisinéir Teanga, 2017a: 25), there was an increase in recent years in the number of schemes accepted by the relevant minister, as all schemes must be for them to have force under the *Official Languages Act 2003*. Despite this seemingly positive development, the Coimisinéir’s office reported in 2017 that the majority of public bodies had reduced the provisions in their second and/or third schemes, with the usual response to an investigation into non-compliance with an aspect of a scheme simply being to remove the aggravating provision from subsequent iterations of the scheme (Coimisinéir Teanga, 2017b: 13). Consequently, although many public bodies have had their schemes accepted by the minister, they often contain very little of substance to provide for Irish speakers. When combined with the fact that Walsh (2011c; 2012b) reported that the original versions of these plans were themselves very weak, the extent to which this development

rendered language revitalisation efforts in the public service almost worthless becomes apparent.

In light of the enormous NPM restructuring of public bodies, however, these developments are hardly surprising. Such widespread reforms and the overall worsening of employment conditions they entail can hardly be seen as conducive to implementing language schemes, which are never likely to be amongst the most pressing of issues in an assessment of any public body's duties. This is especially true due to the lack of powers available to the Coimisinéir Teanga to impose any significant penalties as a result of non-compliance. Given the fact that all Irish speakers can also speak English and that the 2003 Act contains few clear, enforceable rights, the provision of Irish-language services is unlikely to ever be seen as anything more than a symbolic gesture of good will, liable to be removed when budgetary and human resource contractions so require.

Indeed, when faced with such heavy budgetary cuts and the compulsion to complete an ever-greater range of duties, public bodies adopted a range of evasive tactics such as the common refrain that their language schemes will be implemented "in so far as resources allow" (in much the same way that the Act itself does, see 1.5). In the following extract two senior employees in the Coimisinéir's office discuss the Department of the Environment's language scheme:

*A: Trí huaire déag bhí sé luaite go bhfuil sé ag brath ar acmhainní. Yeah. But tá sé sin ag tarlú go...*

*G: Go rialta.*

*A: B'fhéidir nach bhfuil sé chomh follasach anois, go bhfuiltear ag rá ag brath ar acmhainní...*

*G: Yeah, yeah.*

*A: Ach d'fhéadfadh sé a bheith curtha ar bhealach go bhfuil sé an-deacair na gealltanais atá tugtha a bheith tomhaiste agus a bheith curtha i láthair ar bhealach go mbaineann siad amach toradh.*

Further examples of this tendency were given in the Coimisinéir's 2018 Oireachtas statement (Oireachtas Éireann, 2018b). Indeed, in 2018 the Coimisinéir announced that such was the extent of non-compliance with these schemes and the lack of worthwhile provisions contained therein that his office was discontinuing monitoring their implementation, considering it to have become a waste of the "*acmhainní teoranta*" available to his office (Tuirisc.ie, 2018f).

One often-cited difficulty relating to the implementation of language schemes is the lack of Irish-speaking staff in the public service. As has repeatedly been stated by the Coimisinéir, the number of Irish speakers being recruited remains vastly inadequate to facilitate widespread implementation. Indeed, figures published by Tuirisc.ie in 2017 showed that just 15 of the 18,775 positions spread across 15 state departments have a specific Irish-language requirement – a minuscule 0.08% (Tuirisc.ie, 2017i). Despite Seán Kyne, then minister of state responsible for the Gaeltacht, announcing that he intended to take steps to rectify this, less than a week later the position of secretary of the DAHRRGA, the most senior civil servant with responsibility for the Gaeltacht, was given to a woman unable to conduct her duties through Irish (Tuirisc.ie, 2017i; 2017j).

While often explained as an issue resulting purely from a lack of political will, this issue of recruitment can also be read as a consequence of the NPM model. In the same way that the private sector (fully aware of the limited market value of minoritised languages) remains extremely unlikely to employ someone due to their being a minoritised language speaker, a public service governed by NPM is not likely to pay much heed to such matters. In the absence of an ambitious recruitment policy favouring Irish, the NPM ideal of recruiting the "best" employees from either the public or private sector, nationally or internationally, means that the likelihood of a recruit being a competent Irish

speaker is slim.<sup>6</sup> Relatedly, it was in the wider context of civil service reform described above that the decision was made in October 2013 to discontinue the awarding of bonus points to those who completed the civil service entrance exams in Irish, a positive discrimination measure that had been introduced after the compulsory Irish exam was abolished in 1974 (Conradh na Gaeilge, 2013).

With the programme for the “*Government of National Recovery 2011-2016*” committing to reviewing the *Official Languages Act 2003* to “ensure expenditure on the language is best targeted” (Government of Ireland, 2011: 59), the department responsible for the Gaeltacht conducted a public consultation on amending the Act in 2014. Based on the submissions to this consultation, the draft heads of the *Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2017* were eventually released in 2017 and included a commitment to

the overall objectives of 20% of new recruits to the public service being Irish speakers, of all public offices situated in Gaeltacht areas operating through the medium of Irish and of increasing the capacity of public bodies to provide public services through Irish (Government of Ireland, 2017a: 15).

Although appearing to mark a major change of direction, the confirmation by the head of Irish-language policy in the department that this commitment would not be including a deadline or time frame for its implementation led to widespread condemnation (Oireachtas Éireann, 2018c). Both language promotion bodies and the Coimisinéir Teanga stated that such a policy was all but meaningless without a delineated time frame, and was therefore surely set to be yet another failure (Coimisinéir Teanga, 2018; Oireachtas Éireann, 2018d). In early 2019, eight years after amending the Act was first committed to, the minister responsible for language policy was forced to renege on his promise to update the legislation “as soon as possible”, announcing these

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<sup>6</sup> The decision by the board of directors of the National University of Ireland, Galway to abolish the Irish-language requirement for the position of university president was made on the basis of such logic in 2016 (Tuairisc.ie, 2016h).

reforms were to be postponed yet again, this time due to the need to pass emergency legislation dealing with Brexit (Tuairisc.ie, 2019).

Unlike other accounts about the position of Irish in the public sector, one well-informed interviewee, when I asked to what extent he felt the recession provided an excuse for the state to withdraw from Irish-language provision, expressed some awareness of the wider structural context in which public servants operate:

*S: Domsa ag breathnú air, go fuarchúiseach, ní, ní cuid den chúlú eacnamaíochta é sin, ach cuid den chúlú atá gá dhéanamh ag na státseirbhísigh agus ag an stát ó bheith freagrach as rudaí iad féin agus é a chur ar ais ar dream éigeant eile. I mean cheapfainn go bhfuil saghas meon nua tagtha isteach sa státseirbhís go bhfuil muid ag seasamh siar ó aon rud a dhéanamh nó aon cinneachaí a dhéanamh, fágfaidh muid é sin ag rialatóirí agus é sin, regulators. Ach tá muid sábhailte, so ní féidir aon cheisteanna crua a chur orainn sa Dáil, mar “ó tá dream eile ag plé leis sin”.*

While not explicitly naming it or appreciating the extent to which this process was accelerated by the recession, his statement is nonetheless perceptive and, indeed, clearly describes the NPM approach. During the address to the *Parliamentary Sub-committee on the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* at which he announced his resignation, the first Coimisinéir Teanga made a similar allusion:

*Creidim go bhfuil an teanga á ruaigeadh ar leataobh go leanúnach chuig imeall na sochaí, agus áirím anseo cuid mhaith den riarachán poiblí. Ní chreidim ar chor ar bith gur ar an aicme pholaitiúil is mo atá an locht ina leith seo ach feictear dom, cé go bhfuil daoine sa státchóras a thacaíonn go láidir leis an Ghaeilge, go bhfuil fórsaí níos láidre agus níos forleithne fós ann ar cuma leo ann nó as dár dteanga náisiúnta (Oireachtas Éireann, 2014).*

While not going any further to define what exactly was meant by “*fórsaí níos láidre agus níos forleithne*”, this comment nonetheless clearly implies that the issues faced by Irish are greater than just the apathy of public servants. In light of the evidence presented thus far, I believe it is clear that the neoliberal NPM paradigm is a key factor in this “*ruaigeadh*” (“expulsion”). Explanations of the lack of adherence to the language schemes such as “[*n*]í bhaineann sé sin leis

*an ngeilleagar, sin meon rialtais*”, as one Irish-language activist put it to me, are, in my estimation, deficient. They fail to appreciate the extent to which an economic environment as challenging as the recession and the ideological hegemony that drives the Irish economy impact the organisational structures of the public service, and, therefore, the ability of the professional managerial class to implement language schemes and assorted measures.

There is, of course, some amount of agency behind the side-lining of Irish in the public service, with at least some officials likely aware that their decisions to not implement language schemes – or to implement them only in part – are incompatible with the requirements of the 2003 Act (see Ó Flatharta et al., 2014: 52 on the role of individual managers in implementing language policies). Nonetheless, this agency is clearly exercised under the restraints produced by NPM structures. Indeed, as one long-term civil servant told me *“[f]eictear domhsa nach bhfuil ann ach pian sa tóin daofa”* – one more issue to be dealt with on top of an already excessive workload. While top-down minoritised language policy implementation would surely remain challenging under a different managerial paradigm (as the experience of the civil service before the 1970s demonstrates (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 18-9)), NPM is most surely not an approach conducive to language revitalisation and provides a key structural obstacle which makes up part of the wider neoliberal paradigm that is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

#### **4.2.10 Neoliberalism as a structural impediment to effective language revitalisation policies**

##### **4.2.10.1 Policy making under austerity**

As has been described, the impacts of the crisis and the ensuing policy reforms have significantly impacted the strength of Irish-language policy. While a number of these developments have already been documented in more detail than the length of this thesis permits (Ó Murchú, 2014), there has as yet been no detailed attempt to situate them in the wider ideological context that drove the state’s response to the crisis, that of neoliberalism.

The problematic nature of this ideology for those involved in language planning can be clearly seen in the fact that Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, a foundational text in the development of neoliberalism, consists almost entirely of a diatribe against economic (and, by extension, social) planning, with the author contending that "planning leads to dictatorship because dictatorship is the most effective instrument of coercion and, as such, essential if central planning on a large scale is to be possible" (2006 [1944]: 74). Hayek reserves his greatest ire for those forms of economic planning which are redistributive in nature (2006 [1944]: 36), a position which raises significant difficulties for the sort of revitalisation programmes that are typically required to reverse language shift. While slightly different from the dynamic often critiqued by neoliberals in which a wealthy minority has their wealth expropriated to support a larger, less well-off group, revitalisation projects aimed at strengthening the position of minority groups require significant investment, and almost by definition, the transfer of resources from dominant to minority groups. Furthermore, such redistributive efforts are likely to be required for the long term:

[i]f [revitalisation-oriented] language policies are to have any significant impact, they will require large resources on a scale which has not been hitherto realised. Effective language policies will and must affect all aspects of national life and will have to be sustained for decades, if not forever (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 283).

While a large minority of Irish people have some knowledge of the language and are well disposed to it, the numbers who actually speak the language on a regular or semi-regular basis constitute only a miniscule percentage of the population (see 5.2.2 below). Those who do so in the Gaeltacht comprise an even smaller category, and can thus only be meaningfully understood as a minority group within Irish society.

If minoritised languages like Irish are understood as inherently *social* goods, as Grin (2006: 81) and Ó Flatharta et al. (2014: 57) argue they should be, it becomes clear that they can only be effectively maintained through societal intervention. As Spolsky has pointed out, "[i]t is changes in society that affect



linguistic diversity, so that it is social policy rather than language policy that is needed to maintain it” (2004: 8). Similar points have been made by a great many other prominent writers in the field (e.g. Cooper, 1989: 1; Crystal, 2000: 154; Fishman, 1991; Romaine, 2006: 456; Williams, 2014: 243). Neoliberalism, however, is a firmly individualist ideology (cf. Thatcher’s famous “there is no such thing as society” statement, itself based on Hayek, 1988: 112-9) and is therefore contraindicated to the type of planning required for language revitalisation. As one of my interviewees – one of very few who explicitly mentioned neoliberalism – exclaimed:

*M: Sin an nualibrálachas aríst – níl function ag an stát ach riar do lucht gnó. Níl dualgas sochaí ar an stát, agus tá an Ghaeltacht ina shochaí, agus is cuid de shochaí na tíre í an teanga. Ach . . . níl bocsa sa spreadsheet fá choinne seo, so níl baint acu leis.*

This ideological bias, coupled with the fact that Irish is the preserve of a minority of regular speakers which had little experience of collective political mobilisation in the years before the crash – and were thus unlikely to mount significant resistance (see, however, 5.6) – meant that language-related funding was disposed to receive very large cutbacks in recent years. Section 5.2.3 discusses the tendency of austerity to target the poorest most severely – a further major challenge in light of the class composition of much of the Gaeltacht.

In a telling example of the extent to which the language has been de-politicised in the Republic, despite the severity of the cuts to Irish language provision, language advocacy groups and activists have been reluctant to make an explicit connection between neoliberal ideology and these decisions. Particularly amongst state-funded language groups there was almost no concerted opposition to austerity, although this was the case for campaign groups in many sectors which are fully or partly funded by the public purse (Harvey, 2014; see also 5.6). Instead, similar to the discourses around the public service described in 4.2.9, the unambitious and underfunded language policy regime of recent years is widely understood to be the product of individual politicians’ or specific parties’ animosity to the language: “[t]á meon

*faoi leith . . . maidir leis an rialtas a bheith in aghaidh na Gaeilge*” as one informant told me, a statement typical of many others I heard.

As Ó Murchú has pointed out, however, “[r]ómhinic sa tír seo cuirtear an locht ar dhaoine nuair is cirte é a chur ar chóras nó ar choinníollacha” (2006: 27). With neoliberalism being the consensus ideology amongst Irish elites (Murphy, 2014: 139-40), the strength of language policy is not predominantly an issue of how much individual politicians like or dislike Irish, but rather of a hegemony that is inherently averse to state investment in such an area. Indeed, during a large part of the period described in this thesis both the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste (Enda Kenny and Eamon Gilmore, in office 2011-17 and 2011-15 respectively), were fluent Irish speakers, a very uncommon occurrence. Each was very willing to engage with Irish-language media and, seemingly, held positive sentiments towards the language. Such personal affiliation was clearly insufficient to prevent the severe cutting of Gaeltacht-focused schemes, however, with Irish coming low on the list of priorities for officials committed to implementing restructuring measures in a time of crisis. As one of my informants, a lobbyist with considerable experience discussing Irish-language policy with politicians, told me when asked about the widely held belief that the current political elite are opposed to Irish:

*M: Léiríonn sé nach raibh an Ghaeilge-Gaeltacht mar thosaíocht . . . Ní hé go bhfuil naimhdeas ann, ag an cuid is mó de pholaitoirí in aghaidh na Gaeilge, ach nuair a bhí siad ag breathnú ar na fadhbanna a bhí acu le réiteach ní raibh an Ghaeilge-Gaeltacht mar chuid de sin.*

Another activist commented that, similar to the reforms of ÚnaG described above being part of a wider policy of public service reform, cuts to language planning were not due to animosity to Irish *per se*: “*baineann sé le cinntí a ghlac an rialtas maidir le fiacha, seilbh a ghlacadh ar fiacha, nuair atá tú ag íoc ar ais an leibhéal fiacha is atá muid, gearrfar siar ar chuile rud*”. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a policy environment more inhospitable to Irish than that of the Great Recession, with massive cuts to state spending inevitably impacting a sector almost entirely dependent on public funding severely.

As with the case of NPM, by emphasising the animosity of individual politicians or parties, popular non-structural assessments of language policy fail to accord adequate significance to the ideological paradigm which defines how states make social policy. This paradigm was promoted not just by the native political class post-2008, but by the Troika after they became involved in state finances in late 2010. While the depth of influence of such supranational constraints on policy is debatable, the role of the Troika during this time must be considered, not least due to their well-established reputations as institutions central to the propagation of neoliberalism internationally (Allen and O'Boyle, 2013: 13-20). Given that there were – as several authors have noted (e.g. Murphy and Dukelow, 2016: 322) – many similarities between the state's *National Recovery Plan 2011-2014* and the *Memorandum of Understanding* agreed with the Troika, it seems there was relatively little need for the external imposition of neoliberalism. Although this memorandum required punitive austerity measures and the marketization of public spheres previously insulated from such measures (Mercille and Murphy, 2015: 90-106), the extent to which the Irish elite were already committed to neoliberal ideology means that the Troika were largely “pushing an open door” (Dukelow, 2015). Then finance minister Brian Lenihan repeatedly insisted that the policies enacted in 2010 were “ours alone” (BBC, 2010), a fairly plausible statement considering the neoliberal policies his government had long since pursued and the path dependent nature of such fundamental policy trajectories. Although it is typically almost impossible to measure the extent to which policies are adopted as a result of coercion (Cairney, 2012: 256), the Troika's influence seems most visible in the pace and intensity of austerity measures, with policymakers “able to advance change without the domestic vetoes they might otherwise have expected” (Murphy and Dukelow, 2016a: 322).

With Irish elites anxious to be seen as compliant from the earliest days of the bailout programme, it is therefore unlikely the Troika would have even had to mention the issue of reducing Gaeltacht funding. As Crenson explains in his influential work on agenda setting, the reputations of powerful institutions often guarantee a favourable outcome without them having to actively exercise

power (1971: 125). The effective implementation of many of the language-related policies discussed in this chapter would thus have been kept off the agenda purely by virtue of the reputations of these institutions, the exigencies of the crisis and the anxiousness of the Irish elite to end the recession as quickly as possible via budgetary contraction. The contributions of Bachrach and Baratz (1963) and Lukes (1974) to the community power debate – a seminal discussion in political science in the 1960s and 70s about the nature of political power (Cairney, 2012: 46-58) – are of great pertinence here. As these authors noted, the so-called “second face of power” (see also 1.4 and 4.2.4) is often exercised primarily to keep issues off the political agenda and away from public attention, a point which tallies with Dye’s popular definition of public policy as “whatever governments chose to do or not do” (1972: 2). In the overall context of state expenditure the amount spent on LPP was admittedly a relatively small amount. Nonetheless, when the severity of the crisis and the presence of the Troika is combined with the requirements of small states under neoliberalism to compete with one another for FDI, to keep their investors happy and to not buck international trends (Cairney, 2012: 11, 16), programmes focused on language maintenance in the marginal communities of the Gaeltacht stood little chance during the recession.

#### **4.2.10.2 Neoliberalism and the formation of social attitudes**

A further important issue regarding minority language policy under neoliberalism relates to the ways in which social attitudes are conditioned by the economic environment in which we live. While the extent to which language policy attempts to form rather than merely respond to public attitudes has long since been debated (CILAR, 1975: 289), there is little doubt that where significant public opposition to expenditure on the language exists, it is much less likely the political class will seek to dedicate resources to language revitalisation efforts. Neoliberal measures, however, decrease exactly the social solidarity which is required to ensure widespread public support for such expenditure. As is well documented, neoliberalism and the Great Recession have led to massive, unprecedented levels of inequality (Piketty, 2014). Commenting on data from before the crash, Judt explains that

[e]ven trust, the faith we have in our fellow citizens, corresponds negatively with differences in income: between 1983 and 2001, mistrustfulness increased markedly in the US, the UK and Ireland – three countries in which the dogma of unregulated individual self-interest was most assiduously applied to public policy. In no other country was a comparable increase in mutual mistrust to be found (Judd, 2010: 20).

Even before the crash wealth distribution in Ireland was enormously unequal, with 1% of the population reported to own 34% of the wealth in 2007 (Bank of Ireland, 2007: 12). The extent to which the crisis has exacerbated this tendency can be inferred from the recent *Irish Independent* report which found that the richest 300 people in Ireland doubled their wealth between 2010-17, from €50 billion to €100 billion, giving them combined wealth significantly greater than that of the original bank bailout. The eleven richest people now have the same wealth as the top 300 had in 2010, a roughly 27 times greater concentration of wealth amongst the super-rich during the most severe economic crisis in the state's history (Irish Independent, 2017).

This inequality and its resultant decline in trust has considerable implications for social attitudes: “trustees tend to believe that everyone should be treated with respect and tolerance” (Pickett and Wilkinson, 2010: 56). “Respect and tolerance” are, of course, fundamental prerequisites for the kind of pluralist society which is supportive of minoritised language rights. With its commitment to individualism and survival-of-the-fittest competition, neoliberalism, then, quickly becomes “social Darwinism in an economic disguise” (Verhaeghe, 2014: 119; see also Dorian, 1999: 10-2 regarding the effects of social Darwinism on minoritised languages).

Relatedly, in polities with weak welfare provision, the population tends to be much more reluctant to accept radical policy changes (Chang, 2016), a fact which also has obvious implications for the political viability of policies requiring wide-scale redistributive investment in the Gaeltacht. Conversely, the presence of a significant social safety net makes policies of investment in peripheral locations seem much less threatening. While such measures may not be universally supported, it is understood that they will not result in

significant poverty or hardship for anyone, with state investment not being a zero-sum game consisting of an either/or Gaeltacht-Galltacht dichotomy whereby investment in the Gaeltacht likely means divestment from the Galltacht. Although the Irish welfare state was never as developed as others in western Europe, the recession saw it significantly weakened in a short period (Mercille and Murphy, 2015; Murphy and Dukelow, 2016b). In light of the perilous economic situation experienced by so much of the population in recent years and the hegemonic anti-collectivist sentiments that are fundamental to neoliberalism, it seems unlikely that there would be widespread acceptance of ambitious language revitalisation policies such as those proposed in the CLS (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007b: 31-47), or by Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin (2016: 59-68), thereby presenting a major challenge for those who espouse such policies.

Similarly, people living pay cheque to pay cheque – as a significant percentage of the population have been since 2008 (Irish Examiner, 2013) – also have far less emotional energy and free time with which to be concerned about non-essential issues such as the fate of the Irish language. As Putnam has pointed out

[c]ontrary to expectations that unemployment would radicalize its victims, social psychologists found that the jobless became passive and withdrawn, socially as well as politically. As my economic situation becomes more dire my focus narrows to personal and family survival (Putnam, 2000: 193).

While it is certainly true that the most ambitious revitalisation efforts in Ireland were made while the country was still chronically impoverished, this was the product of a unique set of historical circumstances, including the very significant influence romanticism and linguistic nationalism had on the early generations of Free State leaders (see 1.3). With such conditions not existing, as Putnam notes, people are unlikely to be involved in such “post-materialist” issues (see also Inglehart, 2018 for a detailed exploration of the decline of post-materialist values in recent years).

An employee of ÚnaG in Donegal noted the effects of this very phenomenon on concern for the language while we were discussing the local industrial estate:

*É: Chaill 950 [duine] jabanna anseo . . . but an rud a tharla faoin teanga, bhí sé iontach suimiúil because ghlac na postanna tús áite. Bhí sé iontach suimiúil. Bhí cruinniú poiblí againn dhá bhliain ansin faoi fhostaíocht agus níl dóigh ar bith sa dá bhliain go raibh duine ar bith chun teanga a lua.*

Similar to the constraints on policy makers at a macro-level, in times of economic distress, individuals and communities quite simply have more pressing issues facing them than language revitalisation.

By both affecting the conditions which give rise to public support for post-materialist issues and causing a move to a significantly more deregulated language policy regime since 2008, the neoliberal beliefs that dominate Irish politics have therefore made the maintenance of Irish significantly more challenging. They have also caused widespread social disruption on the micro, community level in the Gaeltacht, as the following chapter describes.

## 4.3 Conclusion

The discussion presented in this chapter has attempted to draw attention to the significant impact of the Great Recession on the formation and implementation of Irish-language policy. As Cairney has pointed out, however, all policy narratives are biased to view some indicators as more important than others, but this is not necessarily a disadvantage (Cairney, 2012: 29). While this present analysis offers but one of many possible readings of the recent language policy regime, analyses of this field have rarely engaged with wider politico-economic factors in detail, often falling into the trap of viewing “bilingual reproduction . . . as autonomous” (Ó Riagáin, 1996: 35). Other studies of this period using alternative lenses of policy analysis would surely offer valuable insights not given here, although in the timeframe in question the impact of the economic crisis on social policy of all types simply cannot be ignored, with the spectre of austerity looming large over both the content and implementation of

official policies. This assessment therefore offers a heuristic tool which allows us to gain a greater understanding of the intersection between macro-level economic forces and the policy decisions that can have such formative impacts on the vitality of Irish-speaking communities.

Similar to the dramatic economic transformations of the 1970s, the Great recession, I believe, represents an example of punctuated equilibrium in language policy, with drastic reforms being implemented in a very short period. The neoliberal ideology driving these reforms is fundamentally opposed to state involvement in social planning or wealth redistribution of the type necessary for language revitalisation and creates social conditions and attitudes which are inimical to such efforts. As Grin has noted

[s]heer market forces, in the unregulated context, apparently contain no built in mechanism that could help preserve them [“lesser used languages”]. This is not to say that market forces cannot be harnessed to this end; however, this is only possible in what I call the *regulated* context (Grin, 1999: 179).

The 2008-18 period in Ireland is of particular interest as it offers an example of state policies shifting between the two poles identified by Grin. While the policies of the Celtic Tiger period were defective in many ways, the acceleration of neoliberalism following the crash led, as we have seen, to a significant shift towards the deregulation of the field.

Although often maligned as being anti-Irish due to the widespread non-implementation of the language schemes required under the *Official Languages Act 2003*, public servants have had their work conditions drastically rationalised by New Public Management reforms in recent years, and it is therefore unsurprising that they would have neglected all but the most essential of their duties. Despite its obvious significance for the implementation of language policy, however, NPM has not to date been considered in LPP literature – either in Ireland or internationally – as being of major relevance to the implementation of top-down language revitalisation efforts.



Similarly, as expressed by several well-informed interviewees, the political class have no particular animosity towards the language, the crisis period simply left them with bigger problems to deal with. This fact, when coupled with their adherence to neoliberalism, the paradigmatic ideological force of Irish politics, meant that the urgency of the linguistic crisis of the Gaeltacht was given insufficient support during the period under study. When coupled with Irish being the preserve of a dispersed minority and Gaeltacht communities overwhelmingly being on the lower-end of the Irish class scale (see 5.2.3), this made language revitalisation programmes easy targets for politicians making dramatic cuts across many sectors.

Providing somewhat of a natural conclusion to the 2008-18 period which this work focuses on, in 2018, as the National Development Plan was being launched to a backdrop of rapid economic expansion, Joe McHugh, then minister of state responsible for the Gaeltacht, announced that the “time of cuts” was over (Irish Times, 2018c). As described in 4.2.5, however, this does not mean that those cuts implemented post-2008 will be reversed, and indeed the proposals for Irish and the Gaeltacht included in the development plan will see expenditure on this area well below 2008 levels even come 2028.

The duplicity that such figures belie notwithstanding, it is hard to not view this “end of the time of cuts” as being too little, too late, with the 2016 census results having clearly illustrated the extent of the damage done by the recession, as 5.2.2 illustrates. Showing little understanding of the severity of the decline demonstrated by the census, Seán Kyne, the minister of state for the Gaeltacht at the time of the results’ publication in April 2017, told the Dáil that despite these figures the *20-Year Strategy* was succeeding and would still achieve its targets (Tuairisc.ie, 2017k). The following chapter offers further detailed discussion of this decline and the social mechanisms which drove it.

While ideological hegemonies such as that of neoliberalism are never monolithic, seamless or totally omnipotent, with people inevitably finding ways to contest and renegotiate such forces, it is nonetheless imperative that an informed assessment of language policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century takes account of

the macro-level forces that shape all our daily lives. This chapter highlights fundamental tensions noted in a great deal of social science literature around agency and structure and the macro-micro dilemma of social causality, and as such can only hope to be but one part of a wider debate on these issues.

While I believe this analysis offers a worthwhile elucidation of some of the macro-level factors restricting revitalisation-focused language policies in a neoliberal society, it is nonetheless of obvious importance that such theoretical discussion be accompanied by an understanding of the practical effects of this ideology on minoritised language communities. To this end the following chapter will detail the ethnographic findings that emerged from more than eight months of participant observation and over 50 interviews. Taken in tandem with the descriptive policy analysis approach offered in this chapter, I believe this will offer a detailed exposition of how exactly neoliberalism has impacted the vitality of Irish in the Gaeltacht since the Great Recession began.



## 5. Neoliberalism and the Gaeltacht – an ethnographic study

### 5.1 Introduction

As explained in section 2.2, neoliberal theory contends that state intervention in social policy stifles the entrepreneurial impulses naturally present in *homo economicus*, thereby restricting profit maximisation, itself understood as an inherently moral act. Accordingly, the neoliberal era has seen a steady decrease in funding for a wide variety of welfare programmes, with economies worldwide being restructured to more closely serve the needs of capital (MacLeavy, 2012: 251). In a world in which the nation-state is the primary unit of political organisation, however, state support is typically very important for the maintenance of minoritised languages, thus leading to a fundamental tension between neoliberalism and minoritised language revitalisation.

Building on the policy analysis presented in Chapter 4, this ethnographic study will explore some of the key ways in which this tension played out in Gaeltacht communities between 2008-18. The meso- and micro-level consequences of many of the macro-level reforms described in the previous chapter will be explored, providing an insight into the practical consequences of neoliberal restructuring for a minoritised language community. While not necessarily the result of reformed Gaeltacht policy *per se*, other repercussions of the crisis such as transformed patterns of population mobility and the decline of important economic sectors will also be examined in relation to their implications for the social, economic and linguistic vitality of the Gaeltacht.

Given its immense significance, the full extent of the Great Recession's impact on the Gaeltacht cannot be covered in a thesis of this length. Rather than offering an encyclopaedic account of the innumerable ways in which austerity measures impinged on Gaeltacht life, this chapter therefore presents an overview of the most salient points that emerged from my research, particularly those that illustrate broader patterns likely to resonate in other national and international contexts. After an overview of quantitative data regarding changes in demographic and language use patterns in recent years, as well as the class composition of the Gaeltacht, the remainder of the chapter will be based on data gathered via participant observation and semi-structured interviews. While an effort has been made to address various issues discussed herein discretely, with the causes of language loss “generally [being] multiple and

interrelated” (Mackey, 2001: 68), there are thus numerous overlaps and interactions between the various topics discussed in this chapter.

## **5.2 Quantitative background**

The fact that Ireland’s five-yearly census of population took place in 2006, 2011 and 2016 allows for a convenient statistical analysis of the period on which this thesis focuses. The 2006 census took place as the Celtic Tiger approached its zenith, before there was mainstream acknowledgement of such growth being unsustainable in the long term. In 2011, by contrast, the country was suffering the full brunt of the second most severe crisis in the history of capitalism (Gamble, 2014). The 2016 census took place at a sufficient remove from 2008 to provide a reasonably long-term assessment of the effects of the crash, at a time when the Irish national economy had returned to growth. As will be seen, however, this recovery was far less visible in Gaeltacht communities – particularly the more peripheral ones – than in the urban core. In order to help contextualise the ethnographic findings presented in this chapter, this section will first give a brief overview of some of the relevant trends visible in census data for the 2006-16 period.

### **5.2.1 Demographic change 2006-16**

Although the state’s population increased from 4,239,848 in 2006 to 4,588,252 in 2011 and 4,757,956 in 2016 (Haase and Pratschke, 2017a: 10), this growth occurred primarily in the cities, particularly Dublin, which recovered relatively rapidly from the crash (Barry and Bergin, 2017: 82). Although the recession was severe by 2011, large numbers moved home during the 2006-9 period, before the full extent of the challenges facing the country were apparent, with the lagged effects of the crisis therefore often being more clearly marked in the 2016 figures than those from 2011. For much of the country, the demographic impact of the crisis was seen primarily in a growth rate much lower than that experienced during the Celtic Tiger, with intercensal population growth falling to its lowest level for twenty years between 2011-16 (CSO, 2017a: 8). County Galway exemplified this trend, with its population growing by 2.4% between 2011-16, significantly less than the 10% increase between 2006-11 or the 6.4% increase between 2002-06. As will be shown to have been the case for many peripheral areas, County Donegal’s population declined between 2011-16, falling by

1.2%. While this may seem relatively slight, it too is in marked contrast to the growth of 9.4% between 2006-11 or 4.2% from 2002-06 (Haase and Pratschke, 2017a: 10).

Prior to the crash, the Celtic Tiger period had seen a reversal of the widespread population loss which had occurred throughout the Gaeltacht for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between 2006-11 there was a 5.2% increase in the population of the Gaeltacht over three years of age – from 91,862 to 96,628 (CSO, 2012a: 9). Although endogenous population growth is partly responsible for this increase (with families being more likely to have children during times of prosperity), much of it was due to in-migration, particularly the return of previously departed migrants and their families. The fact that some 1,197 residents of the Galway Gaeltacht had been living outside of Ireland a year before the 2006 census was conducted gives some indication of the extent of this phenomenon. By 2011 this number had fallen by over 50%, to 564, and increased only slightly (to 711) in 2016 (CSO, 2007a, 2012b, 2017b). Donegal saw a similar pattern – having 380 such in-migrants in 2006, 212 in 2011 and only marginally more, 240, five years later (CSO, 2007b, 2012c, 2017c).

Between 2011-16, the total Gaeltacht population over three years of age fell marginally, by 0.6%, from 96,628 to 96,090 (CSO, 2017a: 69). This small reduction conceals considerable regional variation, however, with those areas nearest Galway city experiencing modest population growth during this time, while more distant areas suffered significant decline (Pobal.ie, 2017). The extent of this disparate impact is perhaps best illustrated by reference to the islands, where, as Hindley observed, the “extremes of Gaeltacht ‘deprivation’” (1990: 69) are most evident. Despite some exceptions such as Inis Oírr and Inis Meáin where the population increased slightly, most of the strongly Irish-speaking island communities saw significant population loss between 2011-16, with decreases of 17.4% in Toraigh, 8.8% in Árann Mhór (both in Donegal), 15.4% in Leitir Mealláin and 9.8% in Inis Mór, each of which are in Galway (CSO, 2017d). By contrast, Bearn/Cnoc na Cathrach, a peri-urban weak Gaeltacht area on the outskirts of Galway city, saw a small population increase between 2011-16, from 11,164 to 11,696 (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2017). Such growth was itself partly the result of population movements from more rural areas (cf. O’Donoghue et al., 2017: 26).

Although increases near the city meant that the population of the Galway Gaeltacht overall did not decline between 2006-16, similar to the picture at a national and county level, its growth did slow significantly, as shown in table 5.1. Donegal's Gaeltacht area, however, saw a 5.7% drop in population between 2011-16 (table 5.2). There was also a notable decrease in the 20-34 age group in both the Donegal and Galway Gaeltachtaí during this time. In Galway this cohort numbered 10,972 in 2006, falling to 10,724 in 2011 and 9,339 in 2016 (-15% over ten years). In Donegal the same category fell from 3,805 in 2006 to 3,672 in 2011 and 2,833 in 2016 (-25.5% overall). As adults of this age are the most likely to form families and have children, such a decline is of particular concern for the continued domestic intergenerational language transmission that is so key to language maintenance.

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total change</b>	<b>% change</b>
<b>2006</b>	22,524	22,528	45,052	---	---
<b>2011</b>	24,094	24,813	48,907	3,855	8.5%
<b>2016</b>	24,801	25,769	50,570	1,163	3.4%

*Table 5.1 Population change in the Galway Gaeltacht 2006-16 (based on CSO, 2007a, 2012b, 2017b)*

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total change</b>	<b>% change</b>
<b>2006</b>	12,165	11,618	23,783	---	---
<b>2011</b>	12,541	12,203	24,744	1,631	4.0%
<b>2016</b>	11,748	11,598	23,346	-1,398	-5.7%

*Table 5.2 Population change in the Donegal Gaeltacht 2006-16 (based on CSO, 2007b, 2012c, 2017c)*

## 5.2.2 Irish-speaking demographics 2006-16

With the Gaeltacht having become ever more Anglicised over the last several decades, by 2011 66,238 of 96,628 (68.5%) Gaeltacht residents claimed Irish-language ability. As with previous censuses, however, the number of daily speakers outside the education system was significantly lower, at 23,175 – just 24% (CSO, 2012d: CD964, CD965). Five years later, 63,664 (66.3% of the total Gaeltacht population) claimed the ability to speak Irish, with 20,586 (21.4%) speaking Irish daily outside the education system (CSO, 2017e: EA055). This represented a drop of 2,589 daily speakers (-11.2%) since 2011 – an alarmingly sharp decrease over such a short period. The dramatic nature of this decline becomes all the more apparent when contrasted with the 2006-11 period, which saw a 1.4% increase in the same category.

	<b>Speak Irish daily outside the education system</b>	<b>Speak Irish daily inside and outside the education system</b>	<b>Gaeltacht Total</b>	<b>% change</b>
<b>2006</b>	17,687	5,179	22,866	---
<b>2011</b>	17,955	5,220	23,175	1.4%
<b>2016</b>	16,199	4,387	20,586	-11.2%

*Table 5.3 Daily speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht, 2006-16 (based on CSO, 2007c: 87, 92; 2012d: CD964, CD965; 2017e: EA055)*

As table 5.4 shows, on a nationwide basis (including the Gaeltacht), between 2006-11 the number of daily Irish speakers outside of the education system grew by 7%, from 72,148 to 77,185, before falling to 73,803 (-4.5%) between 2011-16. The figures for the state outwith the Gaeltacht show a similar pattern – growth from 2006-11 followed by decline from 2011-16. Daily speakers outside of the education system increased from 49,282 in 2006 to 54,010 in 2011, but fell to 53,217 in 2016 (CSO, 2007c: 61, 6; 2012d: CD959, CD960; 2017e: EA055).

As with population change, there are substantial regional differences in language use patterns in both the 2006-11 and the 2011-16 periods, with Donegal experiencing both slower growth during the years of prosperity and more severe impacts from the



recession than Galway. 2006-11 saw an increase of 5.2% in the number of daily Irish speakers outside the education system in the Galway Gaeltacht (10,394 to 10,932), while there was a decrease of 6.3% between 2011-16 – from 10,932 to 10,243 (CSO, 2007a, 2012b, 2017b). In Donegal, the five-year period to 2011 also saw an increase in the number of daily Irish speakers, albeit a smaller one of 2.2% (7,012 to 7,166). 2011-16, by contrast, saw a significant drop of 17.3% (1,237), to 5,929 (CSO, 2007b, 2012c, 2017c).

	<b>Speak Irish daily outside the education system</b>	<b>Speak Irish daily inside and outside the education system</b>	<b>State total</b>	<b>Total for areas outside the Gaeltacht</b>
<b>2006</b>	53,471	18,677	72,148	49,282
<b>2011</b>	55,554	21,631	77,185	54,010
<b>2016</b>	53,162	20,641	73,803	53,217

*Table 5.4 Daily speakers of Irish on a national level, 2006-16 (based on CSO, 2007c: 61, 66; 2012d: CD959, CD960; 2017e: EA055)*

Following the historical pattern described in 1.4 of stronger Gaeltacht areas experiencing shift at a slower rate than weaker communities bordering the Gaeltacht, within category A areas the overall decline was less than the 11.2% drop experienced by the Gaeltacht in its entirety. Nonetheless, even in these strongest areas the decline was also pronounced: between 2011-16 there was a loss of population of 3.4% and a decrease in daily users of Irish outside the education system of 8.4% in category A areas throughout the country (Ó hÉallaithe, 2017b). Again, however, there is a wide range of variation between districts, with Oileáin Árann, for instance, seeing an 11.4% fall in daily speakers, while An Cheathrú Rua (a comparatively well-developed town) was below the average, losing 5.3%. In the category A areas of north-west Donegal this trend was once more even greater – along with a population decrease of 6% there was a 14.5% reduction in the daily use of Irish outside the education system in these areas (Ó hÉallaithe, 2017b). The greater contraction in the number of Irish speakers

compared to the overall population decline is likely due to the deaths of elderly speakers who, as predicted by Ó Giollagáin et al. (2007a), are not being linguistically replaced by younger cohorts of daily Irish speakers, a long-term trend described in Chapter 1.

### 5.2.3 Social class in the Gaeltacht

The relatively high levels of deprivation in communities that have retained Irish as a vernacular have long since been noted in commentary on the fate of the language. The fact that the Congested Districts Board (founded in 1891 as a relief effort for the most impoverished areas of rural Ireland) included under its remit almost all those areas that make up the official Gaeltacht today gives some indication of the long-standing nature of these difficulties (Hindley, 1990: 28-9). Despite several decades of ameliorative efforts by this board, the terms of reference of the 1926 Gaeltacht Commission observed that widespread poverty persisted in the Gaeltacht, with detrimental consequences for the future of Irish therein:

*[i]s eol dúinn gurb éinní amháin, geall leis, na ceanntair [Ghaeltachta] agus líomatáistí tuatha áirithe in Éirinn ina bhfuil fadhb chruaidh chasta economíochta le réiteach. Tá dlúth-bhaint ag ceist na Gaelge agus ag an gceist economíochta le n-a chéile agus iarrtar ar do Choimisiún-sa iad do bhreithniú i dteanta a chéile (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: 2).*

These high levels of impoverishment continued well after the founding of the Free State, leading novelist and socialist activist Máirtín Ó Cadhain to claim that the native Irish-speaking community comprised the most impoverished class in the country. Referring to them as “*an aicme is direóile agus is buailte den mhuintir seo againn in Éirinn*”, Ó Cadhain claimed that the language couldn’t be saved without waging a class struggle aimed at alleviating the material deprivation of Gaeltacht residents (in Costigan and Ó Curraoin, 1987: 326).

In contrast to an era when petty-bourgeois middle class individuals in the Gaeltacht (shopkeepers being an oft-cited example) were key in instigating language shift, the growth of Irish-language media and institutions such as ÚnaG helped with the development of a small but loyally Irish-speaking middle class in the Gaeltacht since the 1970s (Hindley, 1990: 175-7, 219-20). It was with the exceptional economic growth of the Celtic Tiger that the Gaeltacht’s history of impoverishment was most fully overcome, however, with the result that by the year 2000 the Gaeltacht had near-full

employment (Walsh, 2011a: 311). While more peripheral areas such as the island communities of Donegal continued to struggle with issues of structural unemployment even during the boom, this period undoubtedly saw a significant change in the Gaeltacht's economic fortunes. As observed by several researchers, however, the immigration associated with this prosperity itself contributed to language shift in many cases (e.g. Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 174-6; see also 5.3.4; 5.5).

As it did nationally, the 2008 crash saw a return to unemployment and emigration from the Gaeltacht – phenomena discussed at length in 5.3 and 5.5.1 below. Unsurprisingly, analysis of the 2016 census results showed that almost all the stronger Irish-speaking areas in Galway and Donegal were classed as disadvantaged areas, with the few exceptions all being within a half hour's drive of Galway city (Tuairisc.ie, 2017I). Like the Scottish typology of “fragile areas” characterised by “population loss, low incomes, limited employment opportunities, poor infrastructure and remoteness” (Phillips, 2017; see also HIE, 2015), the *Pobal HP Deprivation Index for Small Areas* combines various indices of deprivation such as unemployment, population loss, educational achievement and age dependency (Pobal.ie, 2017). This index offers a valuable insight into the current extent of disadvantage in the Gaeltacht: based on the 2016 census results, the Abhainn Gabhla/Doire Iorrais area of west Galway, for instance, was 17% below the national average on this scale, and nearby areas such as Leitir Móir and Garmna were similarly disadvantaged (-16.9% and -16.5% respectively). Many of the “small areas” (subdivisions of larger electoral divisions) which are amongst the strongest of Irish-speaking communities suffer even higher levels of deprivation and are classed as “very disadvantaged”, with Leitir Mealláin (21% below the national average) and Ros Muc (-26%) in Conamara providing particularly stark examples (Tuairisc.ie, 2017I; Pobal.ie, 2017). The Donegal Gaeltacht also contains several equally deprived areas, including the only two full electoral divisions in the Gaeltacht classed as “very disadvantaged” (An Dúchoraidh and Árann Mhór), although, as with Galway, several small areas within larger electoral divisions are also thus categorised, including strongly Irish-speaking Mín an Chladaigh (-26.5%) (Pobal.ie, 2017). The Donegal and Galway Gaeltachtaí contain five districts that appear on the CSO's list of “unemployment blackspots” – the 79 electoral divisions (of 3,440 total) wherein the unemployment rate is at or above 27%. Indeed, Scainimh in west Galway and Mín an Chladaigh in north-west Donegal are included in the 15

electoral divisions with the highest unemployment rates in the country – the only two rural areas on a list of otherwise urban districts, most of which are in Limerick city (CSO, 2017f: 117).

Notably, almost all Gaeltacht areas in Munster were slightly above the national deprivation average (Tuairisc.ie, 2017l), an indication of the differential socioeconomic status of the mid- and north-west compared to the south and east of the country which was described in 3.2.2.1.

While nowadays it would be incorrect to claim, as Ó Cadhain did in 1969, that native Irish speakers are the most impoverished group of Irish society, it is clear that much of the Gaeltacht retains a large number of inhabitants on the lower end of the class scale. In explaining the disproportionate rates of cutbacks suffered by Gaeltacht communities that were described above, it is worth recalling that it has been well documented both in Ireland and internationally that austerity has primarily impacted the most disadvantaged sections of society (Bisset, 2015: 175-7; Varoufakis, 2016). The lower socioeconomic standing of a great many of the Gaeltacht's inhabitants and their dependence on state support thus left them susceptible to receiving severe cutbacks, a fact not hitherto addressed by Irish LPP literature published since the crash. Acknowledging this class bias of austerity and the inherently anti-neoliberal nature of language revitalisation measures (see 4.2.10; 5.1) is therefore key to explaining many of the developments discussed in this chapter, and provides significantly greater explanatory power than those analyses of Irish LPP and the Gaeltacht that ignore such fundamental traits of Irish society.

### **5.3 Effects of the crisis on the Gaeltacht labour market**

As described above, the Celtic Tiger period saw significant growth in the Gaeltacht economy. Between 2008-12, however, Ireland's workforce of two million suffered 300,000 job losses (O'Connell, 2017: 232), with the Gaeltacht inevitably experiencing its share of this disruption. This section will discuss how labour market changes impacted the Gaeltacht, focusing on the main sectors in which significant shifts in employment patterns occurred, along with the implications of these changes for community and language vitality.

### 5.3.1 Construction

As Harvey has explained, not only are property bubbles such as that which drove the latter years of the Celtic Tiger a recurrent feature in the history of capitalism, but they have become significantly more commonplace since neoliberal policies were widely adopted from the 1970s onwards (D. Harvey, 2012: 30-4). As such, Ireland's property bubble in the run up to 2008 provided an example of a much wider trend in global capitalism. By 2007, when the Celtic Tiger was at its height, more than 20% of male workers were employed in construction and the sector comprised an enormous 25% of GNP (O'Connell, 2017: 239; Glynn et al., 2012: 38).

In late 2008 when the sub-prime mortgage crisis forced Irish banks (which had invested heavily in the credit default swap market) to withdraw credit from property developers as a way to maintain the banking sector's liquidity, there were predictably grave consequences for the construction industry. By 2012 it had shrunk to make up less than 6% of GNP (Glynn et al., 2012: 38) and employment in the sector had declined enormously – “[falling] by 163,000 between 2007 and 2012, a contraction of over 60 per cent” (O'Connell, 2017: 239).

With much of the Gaeltacht suffering from the type of educational inequality that militates against workers being employed in “white collar” positions, as well as there being a lack of employment for those who do attain higher level qualifications, many males from Gaeltacht areas found employment in construction pre-2008 and were thus hit hard by its collapse. This trend was visible throughout rural Ireland, where, between 2008-14, “[u]nemployment increased by double the rate of cities, at about 200%, largely as a result of the collapse of the construction sector” (O'Donoghue, 2014: 19). In line with other research on the matter (e.g. Glynn et al., 2013), the decline of construction was often cited during interviews as a key reason for emigration (see also 5.5.1). As a 26-year-old male interviewee from Donegal told me

*S: [M]una chuaigh tú ag an ollscoil nó ag déanamh cúrsa nó rud neacht mar sin, chuaigh an chuid is mó de na daoine óga ag obair, ag tógáil tithe nó cibé a bhí le dhéanamh – ach d'fhág achan duine mar sin.*

A woman in her early 30s from Galway reported a similar pattern, seeing this sectoral contraction as causing the recession to affect men more severely than women:

*G: Tá chuile dhuine san Astráil, na fir óga, abair an dream atá comhaois liomsa, a raibh mise ar an scoil leothab. Tá go leor acub imithe. Siod dream a bhí ag plé le siúinéireacht, ag obair ar shuíomhannaí tógála i nGaillimh agus rudaí den tsórt sin. Tá siad sin imithe. Tá leath de mo rang, déarfainn, san Astráil, nó i Meiriceá, nó i gCeanada nó áit eicínt. Agus tagann siad abhaile faoi Nollaig agus imíonn siad aríst . . . Ní dóigh liom go raibh éifeacht chomh mór sin ag cúrsaí ar na mrá.*

The statistical evidence bears out this informant's instinct about male and female unemployment rates (although see Spillane, 2015 for an account of the disparate impact of austerity on females). On a national scale, the male unemployment rate rose from 5.2% in 2007 to 16.6% in 2012, falling to 10.4% in 2015. While overall female labour market participation rates remain lower in Ireland than for males, the rise in female unemployment, itself substantial, was notably less severe during this time – increasing from 3.9% to a high of 10.3% in 2013, before falling to 6.6% in 2015 (O'Connell, 2017: 233). The decline of the manufacturing sector, discussed in the following section, also had a disproportionate effect on males, who were more likely to be employed therein, with females in Ireland more often working in the service sector (Share et al., 2007: 176). Consequently, by “2012, two in every three unemployed people were men and, among males, [long-term unemployment] accounted for 67 per cent of total unemployment, compared to 45 per cent of women” (O'Connell, 2017: 234).

In light of the linguistic conservatism of males which often tends to make them more likely to maintain minoritised languages (Gal, 1979: 167; Labov, 2001: 292), such a differential impact and attendant rate of emigration had obvious implications for the vitality of Irish in the many Gaeltacht communities where construction had employed a large proportion of the workforce. Indeed, several of my informants who were apparently unaware of sociolinguistic principles commented on the greater propensity of males to speak Irish. “*Siad na leaids sin is mó a labhródh Gaeilge*” as one young man, then a student in university, told me when talking about those from his home village in Conamara who had not pursued third-level education. Although language shift can undoubtedly be driven by men in situations where the nature of the job market makes their integration into networks outside the local community more likely (Holmes, 2013: 61), in the Gaeltacht males are more often employed in domains which preserve Irish (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 283-8 for discussion of this phenomenon in various other contexts). While the difference is relatively slight, a comparison of the

2016 census figures to those from 2011 does indeed report that the number of male daily speakers fell at a greater rate than the number of females during this time – falling 11.7% and 10.2% respectively (CSO, 2017g). Relatedly, Ó Giollagáin et al. have observed that in lower socioeconomic groups – who were most likely to be adversely affected by the recession – males were more likely to be daily speakers of Irish (2007: 132-3).

### 5.3.2 Deindustrialisation

While not as dramatic as the collapse of the construction sector, Irish manufacturing industry was also seriously affected by the crash, with a 16.9% decrease in employment therein between 2007-12, followed by a partial recovery of 4.7% from 2012-15 (O’Connell, 2017: 239).

As described in 4.2.4, the crisis saw ÚnaG lose almost 75% of its budget, resulting in significant reductions in the amount of grant aid the agency was able to distribute. In 2008 ÚnaG funded 490 projects, but by 2015 this had fallen by almost three quarters, to 124. Their total expenditure on capital grants in 2008 was €13,944,440, which fell to €3,001,968 in 2015 (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2009: 3; 2016b: 3).

Unsurprisingly, the numbers employed in the “client companies” supported by the agency fell as a consequence of this reduced aid and the difficult international market, which led many of these companies to relocate overseas, particularly, as an ÚnaG executive told me, “*comhlachtaí déantúsaíochta, traidisiúnta . . . comhlachtaí teicstíle, comhlachtaí leictreonacha*”. One ÚnaG employee linked this process of capital flight from the Gaeltacht to a wider national trend whereby much of what remained of Ireland’s manufacturing sector moved abroad during the crisis:

*É: [B]hog siad . . . na comhlachtaí, dhá chomhlacht bhog siad go Bulgáir, bhog comhlacht go dtí an tSín. Bhí míle jab á chailleadh sa stát sa tseachtain san am sin. Míle jab déantúsaíochta. Deireadh ré a bhí ann ar dhóigh.*

*B: Deireadh ré na tionsclaíochta?*

*É: Déantúsaíocht traidisiúnta.*

This process is, of course, itself a result of the ability of capital to relocate to areas with lower wages and overheads, a phenomenon greatly facilitated in recent decades by

the neoliberal policies of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank (Parenti, 2016).

Another interviewee who works in the main ÚnaG-managed industrial estate in Donegal linked the estate's decline (from 1,300 jobs in 2008 to 425 by 2016) to a change in the makeup of Ireland's national economy, with manufacturing being replaced by the IT sector, which almost invariably locates in large cities:

*A: [A]n rud atá muid ag feiceáil anseo in Éirinn ná . . . ó thaobh morthionscadail de tá tú ag caint ar thionscadal, mar a deir siad, “eolas-bhunaithe” agus de ghnáth bíonn na tionscadail sin nó na monarchain nó na gnólachtaí sin, cé acu Google nó Yahoo nó Microsoft, bíonn siad lonnaithe i gceantair ina bhfuil ionaid, ina bhfuil ollscoileanna ollmhóra – tá tú ag caint ar Bhaile Átha Cliath, Gaillimh, Corcaigh, Luimneach. Agus níl ceantair tuaithe, fiú má tá ionaid beaga ollscoile, níl siad dul a bheith in ann cúpla céad duine a chur ar fáil ag an leibhéal céimithe agus rudaí mar sin, cineál éagsúlacht céimithe. So an rud atá muid ag feiceáil, sílim féin, ná deireadh leis an ré sin, áit a mbeadh níos mó ná caoga post á chur ar fáil in aon chomhlacht amháin in ceantar mar seo, nó go mbeidh muid ag amhanc ar thionscail bheaga, aríst b'fhéidir eolas-bhunaithe, ach ar scála i bhfad níos ísle.*

Another interviewee, a factory owner in Galway who employs approximately forty people within an hour's drive west of the city, challenged this narrative of the decline of manufacturing in Ireland as being “seafóid”, however:

*M: [Tá sé] ceart go leor rudaí a chur amach go oirthear na hEorpa agus an tSín agus na háiteachaí sin ach de réir a chéile [tiocfaidh] feabhas ar na háiteachaí sin agus [ardófar] na rátaí pá. Agus tá sé tarlaí'. Agus ansin tá tú ag breathnú ar rud agus b'fhéidir nach bhfuil sé an oiread sin níos saoire ná rud a fháil déanta in Éirinn nó i Sasana ach go bhfuil an supply chain fada agus ní féidir brath air. Agus an rud eile atá tarlú ná an cineál digitisation den déantúsaíocht. Tá ceist scileannaí agus chuile shórt mar sin, agus automation agus chuile shórt . . . agus déarfainn gur mó an bagairt é sin [ná postanna ag dul thar sáile].*

While there may well be merit to this argument, the 2008 crash nonetheless triggered a significant decline in the manufacturing sector, with overall employment in this field in 2015 remaining well below pre-crash levels, as described above. Furthermore, as Barry and Bergin describe, very little of the 2012-15 growth in the sector occurred in peripheral areas such as the Gaeltacht (2017: 81).

Above all else, the peripherality of most of the Gaeltacht makes it unappealing to capitalists seeking a base for their operations. This same factory owner confirmed this,



telling me that those areas in west Galway more than an hour's drive from the city were generally too remote to be viable locations for industrial development:

*B: [C]éard é an pointe is faide siar atá indéantaí go mhonarcha?*

*M: Tulach.*

*B: Meas tú?*

*M: Absolutely. TG4, Tulach. Chaith muid blianta [in áit níos faide thiar] agus bhí sé an-deacair orainn. Bhí sé rófhada ó chathair na Gaillimhe, an iomarca taistil . . . deacair ar chustaiméirí teacht ort agus chuile shórt mar sin. Héis, héis TG4 déarfainn gurb shin an pointe. Sin just le bheith réadúil faoi.*

Despite these apprehensions, even the most remote parts of the Galway Gaeltacht that this interviewee felt unsuitable for economic development are, as another informant from Conamara observed, less isolated than the Donegal Gaeltacht:

*R: [Ó] my God, ní hionann Gaoth Dobhair agus Conamara. Tá muid saibhir anseo i gcomparáid le muintir Ghaoth Dobhair . . . Tá siad an-scoite amach . . . Thabharfá faoi deara é, just níl fosaíocht mar a chéile ann. Ar bhealach is mar gheall ar an teorainn tá siad cineál gearrtha amach ón gcathair nádúrtha a bhíonn acu i nDoire agus tá siad an-fhada really, tá siad an-fhada ó thuaidh. I'd say go bhfuil siadsan buailte níos measa, mar ar laghad i gConamara, is cuma cén áit a bhfuil tú i gConamara, tá sé fós indéanta goil Gaillimh. Ach i nDún na nGall cá rachfá?*

An ÚnaG executive in Donegal confirmed this belief:

*B: Céard é an deacracht is mó atá agaibh agus sibh ag iarraidh comhlachtaí a mhealladh?*

*É: Tá seo go hiomlán in éadan achan rud a deirim go poiblí ach, Tír Chonaill!*

*B: Sin a shíl mé, iargúltacht?*

*É: Iargúltacht. Jesus. Níl traein isteach sa chontae, tá muid scartha amach ón sé chontae eile le teorainn . . . Tá tú thuas ansin, tá sé deacair. Tá leathan bhanda millteanach tábhachtach fosta agus níl an tseirbhís cheart againn . . . Is míorúilt é go minic go bhfaigheann muid daoine isteach.*

Similarly, a businessman from Galway noted that locating his business in the Gaeltacht is not an economically sensible thing to do, being instead reflective of his personal commitment to the area: “[m]á tá tú ag iarraidh airgead a dhéanamh rachaidh tú go áiteachaí ar nós Bleá Cliath, áit go bhfuil daonra. Má tá tú ag iarraidh difríocht a dhéanamh go do phobal, go do cheantar, fanfaidh tú sa tuath.”

The challenges of Gaeltacht peripherality are exacerbated by EU regulations that prevent the state from offering higher rates of support to businesses located in remote locations (Ó Cuaig, 2018a), an option which had been available to Gaeltarra Éireann, ÚnaG's predecessor, before Ireland joined the EEC in 1973. As one former employee of Gaeltarra Éireann told me:

*S: [N]í féidir tuilleadh lucht tionsclaíochta a mhealladh le lonnú i gceantracha tuaithe atá scoite amach go mór ón infreastruchtúr, ón gcathair, ón gcoláiste agus mar sin de. So níl ag éirí leis an Údarás mórán monarchan a mhealladh taobh amuigh de 15 mhíle, 20 ciliméadar ó chathair na Gaillimhe. Agus feicfidh tú an rud atá tarlaí' i nGaoth Dobhair, go bhfuil sé bánaí' . . . Bhí uair amháin ann, abair aimsir Gaeltarra, bhí deontas i bhfad níos fearr le fáil má bhí tú sásta lonnú sa nGaeltacht. Bhí . . . Gaeltarra in ann a rá leob "bhuel tá lánfhostaíocht sa Spidéal so níl muid sásta tú a chur ansin. Cuirfidh muid siar ar an gCeathrú Rua thú nó cuirfidh muid siar i gCarna thú. Tá tú ag fáil deontas breise mar gheall air sin". Agus bhí siad sásta é sin a dhéanamh. Bhuel ní féidir leob deontas breise, tá an deontas céanna ar fáil i gCathair na Gaillimhe is atá i gCarna . . . Agus deirtear – níl 's agam an bhfuil sé fíor mar cuirtear an locht ar Eoraip faoi go leor rudaí nuair a fheileann sé do lucht eagraíochta agus polaiteoirí – ach deirtear gur mar gheall ar rialacha na hEorpa atá sé sin.*

While the facts of geography are obviously immutable, economic development policy is not. Although globalisation has often been heralded as seeing the "death of distance" due to the capacity of technological innovations to minimise the challenges faced by remote areas (Cairncross, 2001; although see also Massey, 2005: 90-103), in the absence of policies and resources aimed at providing high-speed internet and transport links to such regions, this trend does little to overcome the core-periphery dichotomy which is so fundamental to the capitalist model (Wallerstein, 2004).

As a Galway entrepreneur told me regarding this dearth of infrastructural provision in the Gaeltacht:

*B: Tá polasaithe éagsúla an rialtais go láidir ag tabhairt tacaíocht d'eacnamaíocht lárnach in áit eacnamaíocht réigiúnach nó imeallacha. Bíodh sé go bhfuil siad á dhéanamh sin d'aon ghnó nó bíodh sé nach bhfuil 's acu níos fearr nó píosa den dá rud. But tá sé ag tarlú agus níos measa atá sé ag fáil.*

The efforts of institutions such as ÚnaG notwithstanding, this tendency has certainly been aggravated by the policies pursued by the state in recent years. The lack of adequate internet provision in much of rural Ireland, for instance, is itself a product of the privatisation drive of the last several decades. Having been state-owned since its

founding in 1984, the national telecommunications provider Eircom was sold off in 1999, a move which the Irish Congress of Trade Unions termed “the biggest single economic mistake made by an Irish Government – until the disastrous blanket bank guarantee of September, 2008” (ICTU, 2011: 1). Eircom has since been acquired by a French billionaire who has little incentive to invest in servicing the most remote communities, leaving much of the Gaeltacht to endure extremely slow internet which makes stimulating economic activity, industrial or otherwise, exceedingly challenging (Ó Cuaig, 2018). This poor connectivity also, I was told, disinclines third-level students to return home at weekends as they once did (cf. 5.3.3; 5.3.5.1). A 2016 report concluded that the Gaeltacht includes some of the worst areas in the country in terms of broadband provision (Tuairisc.ie, 2016i).

The Galway factory owner I interviewed expressed his frustration at this:

*M: [C]heap muid go mbeadh infreastruchtúr maith thart ann . . . Héis 11 bliain ann mí ó shin fuair muid an leathan bhanda i gceart.*

*B: Stop!*

*M: Héis 11 bliain ann. Now dá gceapfadh muid go mbeadh sé mar sin 11 bliain ó shin ní chreidfeadh muid é . . . [A]g an am, cheap muide idir 2003 agus 2007 nó 2008 go raibh an Údarás, go raibh neart maoin ag an Údarás agus go raibh siad in ann feabhas a chur ar rudaí. Agus bhí siad in ann agus cabhraigh linn agus rudaí mar sin ach . . . [le linn comhrialtas] Fianna Fáil agus na hUainigh, na Glasaigh, go mór mhór bhí an gearradh siar ar bhuiséad an Údaráis le feiscint agus ní raibh tada le fáil uathub . . . Ní raibh maoiniú ar bith le fáil ón Údarás agus bhí sé uilig ag brath ar an gcóras príobháideach.*

In light of the move from industrial manufacturing towards the “knowledge economy” discussed above, such infrastructural deficiencies and the profit motive militating against their resolution comprise a major challenge for Gaeltacht-based economic development.

The following extract, from an interviewee heavily involved in the private sector in the Gaeltacht, describes the impact of the crisis on smaller-scale businesses in rural areas more generally:

*B: [N]aoi gcinn as chuile deich gcomhlacht beag a dhún síos idir 2006 agus 2011 bhí siad lasmuigh de Bhleá Cliath. So bhí tionchar i bhfad níos mó ag an gcúlú eacnamaíocht . . . ar cheantrachaí lasmuigh de na príomhchathrachaí. Má bhreathnaíonn tú ar an líon daoine a chaill postannaí in san chúlú*

*eacnamaíochta idir 2006-11, thart ar 90% acub ní raibh oideachas tríú leibhéal acub . . . Mar formhór na comhlachtaí beaga tá siad lonnaithe lasmuigh de na cathracha móra, is beag comhlachtaí móra atá lonnaithe lasmuigh de na cathrachaí . . . Tá thart ar 20% d'eacnamaíocht Shasana lonnaithe timpeall ar Londain, London-based. Tá 40% d'eacnamaíocht na hÉireann timpeall ar Bhleá Cliath! . . . Agus cuireann sé as dom nuair a chloiseas tú na ESRI reports [faoi] méadú 26% ar an GDP, sin bullshit. Ach b'fhéidir méadú 4-5% ar an eacnamaíocht, agus tá sé sin fine – tá méadú go b'fhéidir 6-7% i gceantrachaí ar nós Bleá Cliath, Gaillimh, cathair na Gaillimhe agus mar sin de. But céard faoi Boyle i Ros Comáin? Y'know céard faoi Uachtar Ard? Céard faoi Ghaoth Dobhair? Céard faoi Acaill? Céard faoi Ballina fiú atá níos mó ná sin? Fíor, fíor bheagán.*

Further to the ideological bias towards privatisation, the state's relative neglect of rural development is reflective of a long-established structural feature of capitalism, with the centripetal tendencies and uneven development thereby produced having been well demonstrated by sociologists and geographers alike (Lefebvre, 1970; Breathnach, 1988; Harvey, 2008). Indeed, the suppression of rural life was central to the development of early industrial capitalism (Thompson, 1991), with urbanisation offering a way for capitalists to overcome “the barriers to continuous capital circulation and expansion”, therefore being a strategy for the absorption of surplus product, which in turn produces profit, the fundamental goal of capital (D. Harvey, 2012: 5-6). As seen in 5.5.1, this tendency towards urbanisation in capitalist economies is a key factor driving outmigration from the Gaeltacht, along with the linguistic assimilation such migration typically entails (Harrison, 2007: 14; Saarikivi and Marten, 2012: 2). While ÚnaG endeavours to promote the economic development of the Gaeltacht, not only is it doing so in the face of budgetary cuts and a state economic policy that favours major population centres, but in doing so it must also act against capitalism's fundamental tendency towards centralisation.

Although by 2017 job creation figures for ÚnaG were at their highest point since 2007, there was nonetheless much discussion around this time about the persistence of widespread structural unemployment in remote Gaeltacht areas (TG4, 2017; Irish Times, 2018d; Ó Catháin, 2018). Furthermore, an ÚnaG spokesperson warned that Brexit – itself largely a reaction to the 2008 crash and decades of neoliberalism (Powell, 2017) – “may well be one of the biggest challenges Gaeltacht companies will face in the years ahead” (Irish Times, 2018e). The statement by ÚnaG's CEO that “nearly a quarter (24.5%) of Údarás na Gaeltachta client company exports, at a value

of €154 million, are to the United Kingdom” and that “nearly 60% (€224m) of client companies’ raw materials are imported through or from the UK” highlights the scale of this potential disruption (Connacht Tribune, 2017).

### **5.3.3 The hospitality industry**

Many of my informants commented on the extent to which unemployment and the attendant drop in disposable income affected the social life of the communities I studied, particularly by reducing the vibrancy of local nightlife. Even before the crash, the frequenting of pubs in rural areas was in decline due to factors such as the smoking ban introduced in 2004, the increasingly stringent proscription of driving under the influence of alcohol and the high rates of tax on alcohol sold in pubs (Cabras and Mount, 2015). Like Irish-language media (see 4.2.8), this sector’s difficulties are therefore not entirely a consequence of the economic crisis, although the recession exacerbated their already challenging circumstances. Pub closures increased dramatically during the worst years of the crisis, with over 1,000 closing down nationally between 2007-14, reaching a rate of one a day in 2011 (Herald.ie, 2014; Thejournal.ie, 2014). A Drinks Industry Group of Ireland submission to an Oireachtas committee in 2014 showed that the west of the country was hit much more severely by such closures than the area around the capital (DIGI, 2014: 4). Large numbers of hotels also closed during the recession, including many built in rural areas due to their qualifying developers for tax breaks (Whelan, 2013: 28). Many of these were taken over by the National Asset Management Agency (“NAMA”, a state agency founded in 2009 to take bad loans from property developers). Citing the “commercial sensitivity” of the issue, NAMA refused to release data on the number of hotels it was closing (The Guardian, 2011). A 2009 report for the Irish Hotels Federation, however, claimed that some 15,000 rooms needed to be removed from the market for the industry to remain viable (Bacon, 2009), although data as to what extent this eventually occurred are not publicly available.

These closures impacted many Gaeltacht communities, with the loss of such establishments being lamented by many of my informants. Pubs in particular have long been central to the social life of rural areas where there are few other options for night-time socialising, and their loss was thus seen to have left a void in the social fabric of many communities. As the following extract notes, the fate of these

establishments was intimately linked to that of the construction and industrial sectors discussed above:

*L: [N]uair a bhí [an eastát tionsclaíochta] ag dul go maith bhí na hoibrithe ag fáil pá as agus an phá sin á caitheamh go háitiúil ar na seirbhísí áitiúil agus sna hóstáin, bhíodh daoine ann agus bhíodh siad amuigh oíche Dhéardaoín, oíche Aoine, oíche Shathairn agus oíche Dhomhnaigh – agus b'fhéidir even Oíche Luain fosta! . . . Bhí an áit chomh beo sin. Agus nach maith go raibh an t-airgead acu len é sin a dhéanamh. Bhí an fhostaíocht agus achan rud ag dul go maith! So tá an tóin tite as an eastát ansin, níl a dhath ar bith eile le ráit fá dtaobh de.*

The following extract from an interview I conducted in Donegal in 2015 describes the extent of hotel closures in the community, there now being one hotel open in an area that had six before the crisis:

*H: Shílfeá go bhfuil sé ag fáil níos measa achan bhliain, shílfeá nach raibh an rud is measa tagtha [sa gceantar] go fóill but níl 's agam caidé eile atá le druid. I mean i mbliana nuair a dhruid Óstán Ghaoth Dobhair síos, bhuel dhruid Óstán Ghaoth Dobhair anuraidh. And then dhruid Seaview síos. I mean sin ceann eile, an teach is mó a bhí ag goil . . . Bhuel tá ceithre nó cúig teach ósta atá druidte le blianta, tá sin rud iontach like. And then dhruid Óstán Ghaoth Dobhair . . . druideadh Seaview, tá Tí Joe druidte le blianta, tá Dodge druidte. Y'know an teach a ba ghráth le daoine bheith ábalta fanacht ann. Níl óstán amháin fágtha. Ó! Na Foreland Heights, y'know – druidte fosta. Agus an t-am is measa nach raibh airgead sa tír, roimh an boom, bhfuil 's agat, bhí an dá theach sin ag goil agus ag goil go láidir, y'know. Agus just cuireann sé isteach ar meon daoine . . . But jeepers, tá buailte go holc. Dá dtarlódh sé 4-5 bliain ó shin, but the fact that tá sé still ag tarlú – Seaview just i ndiaidh druid i mbliana like. Agus tá 's agat féin nuair atá níos mó áiteanna foscaillte tá níos mó daoine ag tarraingt isteach ann. Bhuel níl áit ar bith le fanacht anois ach teach Campbell, y'know níl óstán ar bith . . . Tá sin fiáinta.*

An employee of ÚnaG discussed the linguistic implications of such closures:

*B: [N]uair a dúnadh na hóstáin agus an t-infreastruchtúr sin uilig, ar chuir sé sin isteach ar an...*

*É: Teanga?*

*B: Sea.*

*É: Chuir. Because sin na daoine uilig ag obair san áit, cuid iníonacha s'acu, cuid mac s'acu, bhí siad ag fáil jabannaí samhraidh ann. D'obair mé féin cúig bliana i gceann de na rudaí sin, ní raibh an nduine le Béarla. Sin go háirithe infreastruchtúr a bhí millteanach dúchasach ó thaobh teanga dó agus tábhachtach.*

Another interviewee made a similar comment, referring to one of these closed hotels in particular, an imposing building which overlooks much of the surrounding community and now lies in a very visible state of dereliction:

*C: [B]hí an óstán sin beo beithíoch ar feadh tamaill agus bhíodh go leor cleamhnais déanta ann, deirtear, agus gur casadh daoine óga ar a chéile agus tá cúpla áit eile mar é ann. Agus castar ar a chéile iad istigh i Leitir Ceanainn [anois] agus b'fhéidir nach gcastar dhá Ghaeilgeoir ar a chéile . . . Tá briseadh síos ó thaobh cúrsaí teangeolaíoch ann.*

A local parent corroborated this sentiment, noting that such closures have led to his teenage daughter socialising outside the Gaeltacht in a way that had not previously been necessary:

*É: Tá iníon agamsa atá 17 bliain d'aois, caithfidh sí dul go Leitir Ceanainn chuig dioscó. Bhí muidinne ag dul síos an bealach chuig dioscó . . . bhí tú ag bualadh le daoine eile le Gaeilge. Bhí tú ag iarraidh a bheith sa cheantar, bhí sé maith le dul amach sa cheantar.*

A similar pattern pertains to those who have finished their schooling locally and are now at university, with not only the lack of broadband or summer jobs (see 5.3.2; 5.3.5.1), but also the lack of opportunities to socialise reducing their inclination to return home during weekends or holidays. An interviewee from Donegal who divides his time between his home community and working in Dublin explained this as follows:

*C: [N]í théann daoine amach ar scor ar bith, 'sé a mhalairt a bhí ann [le linn an Tíogair]. Bhí achan duine amuigh, go háirid ag deireadh na seachtaine. Bheadh na tithe leanna lán, nó lán go maith, cuid acu iontach lán. But tá sin ar shiúil. So níl beocht sóisialta ann. Na daoine óga, y'see tá cineál, sílim gur fáinne fí a bheireann siad air, na daoine óga, b'fhéidir go gcasfaí orm duine atá i mBaile Átha Cliath ar an choláiste. Agus bím ag ráit "an mbíonn tú [sa mbaile] go minic?" is déarfadh siad leat níl mórán dúil acu i ndul abhaile mar nuair a théann siad abhaile fá choinne an deireadh seachtaine níl áit ar bith le goil amach aige. So b'fhearr leo ag deireadh na seachtaine a bheith i mBaile Átha Cliath nó cibé áit a bhfuil siad. So ní hamháin gur díbríodh ar shiúil iad, seo daoine óga atá ag obair fosta, gur díbríodh ar shiúil iad . . . Ach ansin a mhalairt – cionn is go bhfuil sé mar sin níl daoine ag iarraidh teacht ar ais [chuig a bpobail dhúchais], daoine óga go háiride. Ní raibh sé riamh mar sin, go dtí ceithre nó cúig bliana [ó shin].*

While the tendency of rural pub closures to increase instances of social isolation amongst older people has been well documented (Cabras and Mount, 2017), it is clear that within the Gaeltacht such closures also have linguistic consequences, particularly for the important young adult demographic amongst which linguistic exogamy can

have a significant impact on the language's future. As the developer of the "Index of Isolation" which aims to address "the probability that a Welsh speaker will meet another speaker locally" points out

when considering language transmission . . . the most important group of two is the two parents forming a family. These are usually comparatively young people. The most important spatial distributions, or networks, in that respect are those of young people (Jones, 2007: 28).

The loss of much of the social infrastructure key to maintaining such networks due to the recession is thus far from conducive to Irish-language maintenance.

#### **5.3.4 Criticisms of the Foreign Direct Investment model**

As Kirby and Murphy explain, the neoliberal character of the Irish "competition state" sees its policies favour the requirements of international capital "over the needs of its own citizens", with the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) model on which the Irish economy is based providing a clear example of this trend (2011: 21). While ÚnaG has been relatively successful at attracting enterprise to the Gaeltacht since its establishment (Walsh, 2011a: 310), the FDI approach they use was the subject of sharp criticism amongst many of my interviewees. Criticisms of the type of work made available through such investment and the attitude of client companies to the Gaeltacht were particularly common.

Ireland's comparatively low wages have been a key selling point through which the state has marketed the country to international capital for many decades (O'Toole, 2010: 16), and high rates of unemployment in the Gaeltacht have typically ensured that a large pool of low-cost labour is available therein. This, in combination with the reduction in union density that Ireland has seen in recent decades (McDonough, 2010: 452), means that a key attraction of the Gaeltacht to investors is the submissive nature of its workforce, with workers not only unlikely to be unionised, but also rarely having other employment options available. Indeed, several ÚnaG employees told me that they explicitly promote the Gaeltacht on this basis, as seen in these quotes:

*R: [T]á muidinne ag iomaíocht le ceantracha eile b'fhéidir in Albain nó i mór roinn na hEorpa nó cibé. So féachfaidh muid le cuir ina luí orthu go bhfuil fórsa oibre oílte ar fáil, gur ceantar taitneamhach é le do gró a dhéanamh, go bhfuil dílseacht ag an bhfoireann dá bhfostóir.*



*É: Ní hionann é agus daoine atá ag obair in déantúsaíocht i mBaile Átha Cliath atá ábalta dul isteach agus amach as post. Oibríonn daoine go hiontach maith anseo.*

In light of the impression such sentiments give, it is unsurprising that companies tend to make only limited efforts at language promotion, knowing that ÚnaG is unable to be overly assertive in insisting on the use of Irish by client companies. This issue was a common cause of complaint amongst interviewees, who frequently claimed that ÚnaG's emphasis on employment creation did not pay sufficient heed to linguistic concerns. One interviewee from Galway told me that ÚnaG-supported factories in the area are often staffed by people who commute from outside the Gaeltacht:

*B: An bhfuil mórán ag teacht isteach ó Ghaillimh nó ón nGalltacht?*

*N: An tríú cuid. Sin iad figiúirí an Údaráis iad féin . . . Deir siad nach bhfuil aon ról acu sa bpróiseas earcaíochta maidir leis na comhlachtaí seo. Is dóigh liom go mbreathnaíonn siad orthu féin mar IDA na Gaeltachta, agus go bhfuil siad in iomaíocht leis an IDA le postannaí a chruthú agus an slat tomhais atá acu ná cé mhéad post atá cruthaithe acu. Tá teanga agus cultúr i bhfad níos ísle ar liosta tosaíochtaí atá acub.*

This same interviewee also noted the potential for client companies operating through English to establish a pattern of speaking English amongst Irish speakers, particularly couples who first meet in the work place:

*N: B'fhéidir go ndéantar neamhaird freisin ar na himpleachtaí teangeolaíoch a bhaineann [le nós-mhaireacht teanga i monarcha]. Mar go minic is san ionad oibre a thosaíonn fir agus mná ag siúl amach, nó fir agus fir ag siúl amach le chéile, nó mná agus mná! So tá impleachtaí aige sin, níl atmaisféar Gaelach i go leor de na monarchan.*

A woman formerly employed by a multinational corporation in Donegal – which has since relocated to the developing world – did indeed state that her workplace was dominated by English. Furthermore, in the absence of a workplace language policy favouring Irish, even fluent Irish speakers defaulted to English with co-workers not previously known to them, as speakers of minoritised languages typically do when meeting strangers:

*M: [N]a bainisteoirí uilig a bhí ann is Béarla a bhí acu. Ní raibh iarracht ar bith, muna raibh aithne agat ar an duine roimhe, bhí duine amháin ann agus bhí Gaeilg aige agus labhair mé Gaeilg leis, ach aríst, má bhí tú istigh ag cruinnithe Béarla a bhí sa... Daoine as an nGaeltacht a bhí ag obair san áit ach bhí daoine eile ag teacht isteach ó áiteachaí eile fosta, go háirithe iad siúd a raibh*

*cáilíochtaí arda acu ó thaobh déileáil le caighdeán, déileáil le innealtóireacht agus stuif mar sin, chan daoine le Gaeilg a bhí acu. Ach bhí daoine [as bailte Gaeltachta eile] ag teacht isteach, b'fhéidir go raibh Gaeilg acu ach níor labhair siad é. Agus aríst, tá 's agat an rud a bhí ann, má chastar strainséar ort labhróidh tú Béarla leo.*

Walsh (2011a: 317-35) similarly observes the resistance of client companies to Irish-language promotion measures, with them seemingly being seen as an impediment to commercial success. Nonetheless, Walsh also details ÚnaG's attempts at adopting a more language-focused policy direction in 2005. On the basis of my interviews, conducted a decade after this supposed re-orientation, it would appear that the effects of their reformed approach are not apparent to many Gaeltacht residents, however.

Another interviewee, a man in his mid-20s from Donegal, was particularly frustrated that ÚnaG, in his estimation, funds businesses which function entirely through English but adopt Irish-language names to qualify for grants:

*F: [T]á fadhb millteanach in Údarás mar má úsáideann tú ainm Gaeilge ar do ghnó gheobhann tú deontas.*

*B: Díreach má tá an t-ainm i nGaeilge?*

*F: Sin é like. But níl tú ag déanamh fuck all le focal amháin isteach sa fuckin, I dunno, eiceolaíocht Gaeilge . . . Tá siad just ag úsáid mar uirlis fuckin airgead, bhfuil 's agat. So nuair a amhancaim féin ar rudaí mar sin tá mé just a ráit liom féin "what the fuck?" . . . Like ba chóir daofa airgead Gaeilge a úsáid mar is ceart . . . Sin an fuckin fadhb atá ann . . . Tá an tÚdarás ag déanamh lear rudaí maith, right, lear rudaí maith. But shílím go bhfuil pollaí ann, y'know, pollaí fuckin bómánta . . . Like bhfuil tú ag iarraidh é a úsáid mar fuckin, just é a exploiteáil basically? Fuck off.*

Although perhaps overstated, such cynicism towards many ÚnaG developments was certainly a common theme during my fieldwork. Indeed, another interviewee from the same area commented that even the symbolic use of Irish was something adopted by a company she worked for only when they were forced to do so:

*M: [I]s cuimhin liom gur chuir siad comhartha mór amuigh ar an bhóthar agus bhí sé i mBéarla agus caithfidh go raibh gearrán inteacht déanta, b'fhéidir gur an Údarás iad féin a bhí ag gearrán, agus b'éigean daofa goil amach agus sin a athrú agus Gaeilg a chur air. Ach aríst, tá 's agat, ní raibh an meon sin ann ar char ar bith, tá 's agat, ó caithfidh muid é a dhéanamh i nGaeilg ar tús. Cha raibh riamh an meon sin ann. Agus . . . rudaí a bheifeá ag déanamh go deonach tú féin, bhí sé fágtha ag daoine a raibh dírithe ar an Ghaeilg, nó a raibh suim*

*acu sa Ghaeilg [chun an teanga a chur chun cinn san áit] go haonarach, ní raibh tacaíocht ar bith ann dáiríre.*

Several interviewees did, however, acknowledge there had been a chronic need for employment in Gaeltacht areas before the FDI strategy had helped overcome this dearth, and in this regard ÚnaG's efforts were to be welcomed:

*P: [A]r bhealach amháin rud iontach maith a bhí ann. Bhí sé ag coinneáil daoine sa bhaile, bhí fostaíocht cruthaithe sa bhaile agus bhí go leor daoine ábalta fanacht sa bhaile, daoine a raibh Gaeilg acu ar ndóiche, rud a bhí iontach, iontach maith. Bhí sé iontach tábhachtach agus riachtanach go ndéanfaí a leithéid. Ach . . . don chéad uair bhí cuid mhór daoine in san cheantar nár labhair Gaeilg . . . So bhí athrú an-mhór sóisialta ansin ó thaobh cúrsaí teangan . . . Sin an míbhuntáiste a bhain leis an fhostaíocht sin a chruthú . . . Tá ceist le cur ansin an raibh sé níos diúltaí ná níos dearfaí.*

When asked whether the increased pressures of creating employment post-2008 led them to be more lenient in terms of accepting companies regardless of the linguistic implications, an ÚnaG employee told me that this was not the case:

*É: Ní dhéanann sé difear ar bith . . . Scéal céanna é . . . achan chomhlacht a thagann isteach tá coinníollacha ann. Dúirt fear . . . “we’re not desperate”. We are but ní dhéanann muid sin. No, ní dheanann sé difear ar bith.*

He then proceeded to defend the agency's job creation strategy by comparing a Gaeltacht area in Donegal that had been industrialised to one that had not:

*É: Tá daoine atá den bharúil, a mh'anam, go bhfuil cuid mhór comhlachtaí anseo a rinne dochar don teanga. Ní chreidimse sin agus níor chreid a riamh. An bun rud atá a dhíobháil ort ná cuid mhór fostaíochta le pobal a bheith agat, le dlús daonra a bheith agat, le pobal a bheith agat in áit a bhfuil an teanga muiníneach agus dóchasach inti féin. Sin an rud is tábhachtaí. Agus má amharcann tú ar an dóigh a mhair an teanga i dTír Chonaill, mhair an teanga, seo an áit, tá tú i do shuí san áit is mó a bhfuil teanga na Gaeilg á labhairt taobh amuigh de cheantar uirbeach in Éirinn, má amhancann tú ar dhaonáireamh 2011. Cad tuige? Amhanc amach an fhuinneog! Mar tá an oiread daoine ann. Agus má amhancann tú ar cheantar anois cosúil le Fánaid áit a bhfuil an teanga anois íseal, an imirce a bhí ansin bhí sé buan, níor tháinig siad ar ais . . . Mar ní raibh na jabanna. Ní raibh a dhath ar bith le teacht aríst. Sin an dúshraith, an dúshraith eacnamaíochta – iontach tábhachtach le pobal mairstinn.*

While certainly valid points, it is nonetheless lamentable that this economic foundation was not developed in tandem with more forceful language policies.

In contrast with the alleged loyalty of the workforce to ÚnaG's client companies which was mentioned above, the fickleness of the companies themselves towards the

Gaeltacht was another source of much frustration amongst many of my interviewees, as seen in the following quote from an interviewee in Donegal:

*M: [S]eo an rud a tharlaíonn – labhrann tú leis an IDA, aimsíonn siad sin comhlacht duit, labhrann tú leis an chomhlacht, tairgíonn tú margadh daofa, glacann siad leis an margadh, tagann siad, imíonn siad, back to square one – labhrann tú leis an IDA. Ní chreideann siad i bpobal na Gaeltachta, níl muinín ar bith acu as pobal na Gaeltachta. Dá mbeadh siad ag iarraidh rud neacht, difear buan a dhéanamh . . . níl sé sin goil a dhéanamh difear ar bith. In fact creidimse go bhfuil sé ag déanamh dochar mar tá sé ag bualadh seo aríst i gcloigne daoine, más mian leat jab a fháil caithfidh tú Béarla a bheith agat. “Seo na daoine, tá siad ag déanamh gar mór dhúinn ag teacht as Holland, nó Uzbekistan agus tá siad ag cur monarchan anseo agus ag cruthú fostaíochta. Now ná bigí ag déanamh rudaí amaideacha cosúil le bheith ag iarraidh Gaeilge a labhairt nó goil isteach i gceardchumann, tá ’s againn céard a tharlós, imeoidh siad!” But tá ’s againne céard a tharlós anyway – imeoidh siad! Seo an dearcadh atá ag an Údarás, agus ní dearcadh ar bith é!*

When asked why he felt this model persisted, this interviewee – who was unusually informed politically – went on to explicitly mention neoliberalism, one of very few instances in my corpus of an interviewee doing so:

*M: Sin an nualibriálachas. Neoliberalism, déanann sé sin do dhaoine. Má deir tú rud ar bith nach bhfuil ag cloí leis an nualibriálachas tá tú as do mheabhair. Tá! . . . Tá sé anois chomh lonnaithe sin in sna daoine seo nach bhfuil rud ar bith, nach bhfuil féidearthacht ar bith eile ann ach neoliberalism. Gurb shin an t-aon dóigh le dul chun tosaigh sa saol. Agus bréag atá ann! Bréag atá ann ó thús go deireadh! Go dtig leat achan rud in san tsaol a bhriseadh síos go dtí bocsaí, bocsaí beaga istigh in spreadsheet agus luach a chur ar achan cheann. Agus ag deireadh an spreadsheet má tá positive value ann is fiú é, má tá negative value ann ní fiú é so déan ar shiúil leis. Ní mar sin atá an saol. Like tá an saol bunaithe ar phobail, society...*

While not generally so developed, similar opinions were widespread amongst my interviewees, with a young man from a neighbouring area in Donegal stating: “[n]í bhíonn riamh long-term ann. Ní chaitheann an gnó commitment a dhéanamh don áit, don cheantar, don pobal”.

Furthermore, the type of industries that the FDI model most frequently succeeds in attracting often offer relatively poor-quality positions, as well as often being problematic from a language planning perspective. While there are certainly important exceptions to this trend, the opening of a call centre during the research of this thesis was illustrative of the type of development which many of my informants found immensely problematic. In 2016, it was announced that an English telemarketing

company was to create 125 jobs in the Donegal industrial estate described above (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2016c). In terms of creating employment in a community which had been hit hard by job losses in previous years, such a development was undoubtedly most welcome. Nonetheless, the work in question presented major challenges in terms of language policy. As has been observed elsewhere, it is difficult to imagine a more inappropriate industry to locate in such a linguistically sensitive area than one that quite literally pays people to speak English all day (Walsh, 2011a: 319). Furthermore, adhering to the tendency of such companies to lack any long-term interest in the Gaeltacht, in December 2017 – after just 18 months in operation – this same call-centre announced it was closing immediately, leading to the loss of the 30 jobs it provided (RTÉ, 2017), which was itself less than 25% of the total they originally promised to create.

As one interviewee, who had himself worked in another call centre in the same area quipped: “[t]á go leor de na call centres againn, níl ’s agam caidé an focal Gaeilg fá choinne an fhocal “call centre” ach bheinn níos sásta ag smaoineamh nach raibh focal againn ar an obair sin!” In line with this sentiment, these positions are very often of low prestige, with few parents I talked to wanting their children to take up work in such establishments upon finishing their education. On several occasions I observed that even the most language-conscious of parents have somewhat of a blind spot regarding their own children when it comes to employment and maintaining the population of their communities. One woman, a diligent Irish speaker who I have often heard complain about how few of those activists who are highly committed to the language in urban contexts see fit to relocate to the Gaeltacht, told me during a conversation about her young adult children “[b]’fhearr liom muna mbeadh siad fágtha thiar ar an [oileán] sin”. She then stated that they are better off in the cities due to the greater opportunities available there, and was apparently surprised when I brought up the linguistic implications of such migration. Another man, a former member of the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement who has been very involved in efforts to promote the vitality of his community, commented as follows in reference to his own children:

*D: [A]g cuimriú ar na gasúir sin a’im féin, níor mhaith liomsa dá mba thiar sa mbaile a gcaithfidís a n-óige ar fad. Chuaigh siad isteach go Gaillimh, chonaic siad rudaí eile, chas siad leis an bpobal a bhí istigh ann agus as contaetha eile . . . Seachas grúpa beag acub a bheith thiar ag caint leob féin. Ag caint leis na faoileáin!*

Such attitudes highlight the depth of the economic challenges faced by the Gaeltacht, with even those parents most committed to the language not wishing to see their children involved in the type of employment that FDI has been most successful at creating. With the contrast between the “opportunity deprivation” (Haase and Pratschke, 2017b: 7) of the Gaeltacht and the aspirations now held by many young people and their parents being so great, the maintenance of vibrant Irish-speaking populations becomes increasingly challenging. This is likely to be especially true with regard to retaining populations which include the ambitious and socially mobile, who, as Holmes notes (2013: 61), are very often the first section of a community to shift to the dominant language as they integrate into the wider economy. Those who pursue higher education – an ever-increasing number of school leavers (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) – are even less likely to want to take up precarious, low-paid positions, a fact not lost on parents such as those just quoted. It is worth noting, however, that it may be that the very class background which makes parents such as those quoted above more likely to be interested in language promotion (cf. Wright, 1996: 43) also inclines them to have aspirations for their children which necessarily entail them leaving the Gaeltacht. Their opinions may therefore not be wholly representative of the wider Gaeltacht population.

Suggesting intentions of adopting an approach not so dependent on FDI, in 2014 ÚnaG published a development plan specifically aimed at restoring employment to the Donegal Gaeltacht in which they recognised

*go gcaithfear éiceachóras a fhorbairt le go bhféadfaidh fir agus mná áitiúla a ngnóthaí féin a bhunú ina bpobal agus go gcaithfidh comhlachtaí stáit tacú leis na daoine sin ina gcuid iarrachtaí trí thacaíochtaí cuí a chur ar fáil, cinn airgeadais agus neamhairgeadais araon, ar mhaithe le fiontraíthe a bheith sásta dul sa seans lena ngnó féin a bhunú (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2014: 18-9).*

Despite these intentions, several of my interviewees in the area reported that they had received no such support for their plans to set up a co-operative initiative in an ÚnaG-owned building. As one of those involved in this proposed scheme explained

*L: [C]honaic muid an easpa seort leapacha sa cheantar agus ag ráit, bhuel, caidé a thiocfadh linne a dhéanamh agus bhí muid ag amharc ar cheann de na seanmhonarchana . . . agus tá muid i mbun cainteanna leis an Údarás go bhfeicfeadh muid an bhfuil muid ábalta an foirgneamh a fháil, tá muid ag iarraidh é a fhorbairt . . . Tá an Ghaeilg chomh láidir sa cheantar seo agus tig*

*daoine ag foghlaim na Gaeilg agus b'fhéidir go dtiocfadh linn, go mbeadh sé forbartha go sásúil agus go caighdeán sásúil, áit a dtiocfadh le daoine stopadh, áit a mbeadh seomraí leapa nó cibé rud é agus . . . áit a dtiocfadh le campers stopadh agus luchtú suas ann. Agus ansin dá mbeadh ranganna Gaeilg agus gurb é sórt áit a bheadh ann a dtiocfadh le daoine teacht ag fáil eispéaras ar shaol na Gaeltachta.*

Being both explicitly language-focused and attempting to counteract the dearth of accommodation for tourists resulting from the closure of local hotels (see 5.3.3), such a project would appear most suitable for the area. There was a clear perception amongst several of my interviewees that ÚnaG's strategy of job creation via the attraction of FDI has led to a bias against such local groups, however, with another interviewee involved in this plan expressing his immense dissatisfaction with ÚnaG's attitude towards their efforts as follows:

*M: [T]á muid ag dul dhó le seacht mí, ocht mí. Agus coicís ó shin a fuair muid drawings den mhonarchan atá muid ag iarraidh seilbh a ghlacadh air. Sin ocht mí. Dá mbeadh Johann Klegg an t-ainm a bhí orm agus mé aniar as fuckin Antwerp ag rá gur mhaith liom teacht agus go gcruthóinn fostaíocht do 25 duine agus . . . go bhfaca mé an monarchan seo but look ba mhaith liom cruinniú a bheith agam libh Dé Máirt agus an dtiocfadh libh drawings a bheith agaibh ag an chruinniú, bheadh na drawings, bheadh siad seolta i ríomhphost ar maidin. Mar tá sé taobh istigh den líne bheag – “right seo é, we’ve got him, déan achan rud le cinntiú go bhfuil sin ann”. Má tá dream as an cheantar ag iarraidh rud a thioseacht in sa cheantar, níl suim acu ann. Cuirfidh siad achan bhac os do chomhair . . . [T]á an monarchan sin ina luí folamh le cúig bliana, gan an nduine ag léiriú suime ar bith in san fhoirgneamh agus go tobann nuair a thosaíonn muidinne ag goil ag cruinnithe achan lá, go tobann tá an tÚdarás ag rá go bhfuil suim ag comhlacht ann . . . Fair plé daoibh but tá trí mhonarchan folamh [sa gceantar], tá monarchan folamh [i gceantar cóngarach eile], níl 's agam cé mhéad [san eastát tionsclaíoch], bog isteach ansin! . . . Like b'fhéidir go bhfuil mé just éadóchasach faoi láthair, ach i rith an bhealaigh ó thosaigh muid ní bhfuair muid ariamh an mothú tá siad seo linn, tá siad ag tacú linn, tá siad, creideann siad gur féidir linn rud neacht a dhéanamh. Agus ní hé gur scaifte fuckin lunatics atá ag goil dhó seo – tá sagart ar an choiste, tá bean atá i gceannas ar choiste ionad pobail . . . Tá daoine anseo atá ag obair ar son an phobail agus a dtuigeann go dtig linn fostaíocht a chruthú a bheadh i nGaeilg amháin, a bheadh chun leas an phobail, a bheadh ag cruthú fostaíochta do dhaoine óga agus a bheadh ag díriú ar riachtanais turasóireachta. Nuair atá na hóstáin uilig char a bheith druidte tá muidinne ag caint ar lóistín a chur ar fáil . . . áit fá choinne camper vans, cúrsaí a reáchtáil do thuismitheoirí Gaelscoilteacha. Agus bheadh seo uilig ag tarlú istigh i lár na Gaeltachta . . . agus tá siad ag cur achan fuckin bhac os ár gcomhair.*

Although the experience of this group seems to belie ÚnaG's claims to be supportive of “fiontraite áitiúla”, when asked about the change in the make-up of the local

industrial estate, an ÚnaG executive insisted that not only had they always supported smaller-scale indigenous enterprises, but that such companies had become even more important in light of the recent deindustrialisation of the area:

*É: Tá níos mó comhlachtaí dúchasach againn. Agus sin an treo is dóiche a bhfuil muid ag goil. Mar a deir an Béarla tá muid in denial le fada. Is dóiche nuair a [dhún na monarchana móra] go tubaisteach ansin . . . bíonn go leor daoine ag fanacht leis le teacht ar ais . . . cosúil leis an ghual sa Bhreatain Bheag . . . Níl sé ag teacht ar ais. [Ach] tá daoine chomh nimhneach amuigh sa phobal faoi nach bhfuil tú ag iarraidh é a rá. But tá an t-am é a rá agus tá an t-am a bheith ionraic.*

*B: An rud maith é go bhfuil tuilleadh comhlachtaí Éireannacha ann anois?*

*É: Bhí siad i gcónaí ann. See bhí an miotas seo ann fá Údarás na Gaeltachta nach raibh suim againn ach i gcomhlachtaí móra. Ag an am sin bhí 84% dár gcuid comhlachtaí dúchasach agus ní raibh ach duine go dtí cúigear fostaí iontu. Bhí sé sin i gcónaí againn.*

Despite, then, the many criticisms made by my informants and the numerous challenges they face, ÚnaG does attract enterprise and generate employment on both a small and large scale which would not exist in the Gaeltacht without their support. Indeed, the factory owner whom I interviewed was adamant that ÚnaG was responsible for his own business being located in the Gaeltacht:

*M: [C]aithfear a rá nach mbeadh mórán fostaíocht tionscail i ndeisceart Chonamara murach Údarás na Gaeltachta . . . Níl dabht ar bith agam faoi sin. Agus déarfainn freisin nach mbeadh [siadsan lonnaithe san áit a bhfuil siad] murach Údarás na Gaeltachta. Gan aon dabht.*

ÚnaG's approach to economic development has thus clearly been successful in creating employment and attracting investment that would otherwise not exist. The industries it attracts, however, often leave the Gaeltacht after a short period, and are generally unsupportive of Irish-language use, if not outright Anglicising in their effects. This leads to the common – if contestable – belief amongst my interviewees that ÚnaG offers less support to language vitality than such a specifically Gaeltacht-focused institution should do.



### 5.3.5 Further implications of the decline in employment opportunities

#### 5.3.5.1 Summer work for students

As noted in 5.3.3, in both Donegal and the more westerly parts of Galway I was told that reduced employment opportunities meant that young adults studying in university no longer had a ready source of summer employment in their home communities, which many interviewees told me was customary before the crash:

*S: Gabh thuas, cúpla mí obair, agus ansin bhí an t-airgead agam le teacht ar ais go dtí an ollscoil. Agus an cíós a íoc nó cibé eile . . . Bhí sé iontach tábhachtach. Bhí go leor mic léinn ag obair ann. Agus anois níl sin ann ar char ar bith agus níl 's agam caidé an dóigh atá ag tuismitheoirí . . . páistí s'acu a chur [chuig an ollscoil].*

Prior to 2008 it was primarily those who had already graduated who were unlikely to return home for work. With such summer employment not being available to students during the recession, however, those who succeeded in getting seasonal jobs where they were studying or elsewhere outside their home communities had their connections to the Gaeltacht weakened even earlier than was previously the case. As with the unappealing social life discussed in 5.3.3 and the tendency for emigrants to break their link with the language discussed in 5.5.1, this decline in summer employment has thus contributed to the loss of a key demographic in the Gaeltacht.

#### 5.3.5.2 Community pride

In November 2017 it was reported that of the 516 buildings ÚnaG owns, 106 were empty, with 81 of these having been vacated during the previous decade (Tuairisc.ie, 2017m). 45 such units were in Donegal, where these “white elephants” – as radical architect Brian Anson warned of in his unimplemented Donegal Gaeltacht Development Plan (1982) – stand alongside the abandoned pubs and hotels described above, providing a very visible illustration of the effects of the recession on the community. As an interviewee in Donegal stated

*C: Má théann tú [thart] an ceantar seo timpeall, tá an oiread áiteachaí dúnta suas le feiceáil. Níl ann ach áit amháin i ndiaidh áit eile . . . Tá sé an-uaigneach ag breathnú agus . . . ní chuidíonn sé le beocht a chur in áit ar bith.*

Similar to the closures discussed in 5.3.3, this lack of social vitality makes the area less appealing to either live in or visit than it could be. Indeed, interviewees often

explicitly told me that such dereliction has had a detrimental impact on community pride, as this quote from a language planner working in Donegal explains:

*D: [T]iomáin tríd [an baile ina mbíonn sé ag obair] agus tá dromchla uafásach ar an mbóthar . . . Tá níl 's agam cén céatadán ach tá céatadán maith de na foirgnimh dúnta, le adhmaid ar na fuinneogaí . . . Tá tú in ann a fheiceáil gur druideadh iad, abraimis, taobh istigh de chúig nó b'fhéidir seacht mbliana anuas, bhfuil 's agat. Déanann sin dochar do mhuinín an phobail agus do bhród an phobail. Bhfuil 's agat ní baile mór atá ann agus leath de na foirgnimh sin dúnta . . . Dá mba rud é go raibh mé in ann spreagadh a dhéanamh agus bród na ndaoine a ardú, sin freagra na ceiste. Má tá tú in ann bród na ndaoine – agus tá sé chomh simplí ach níl an réiteach simplí – bród na ndaoine a ardú. Ach arís ní, níl an teanga, níl réiteach na faidhbe cineál . . . in a bubble féin ansin. Tá daoine ag siúl na sráide, téann siad isteach i gcomhair siopadóireacht, feiceann siad leath den bhaile dúnta. Sin, déanann sin dochar. Agus spreagann sé sin, is fáinne fí atá ann, spreagann sé an seanadhearcadh den Ghaeilge, teanga an bhochtanaís . . . Tá sé difriúil do dhaoine sa poblacht lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht . . . ach má chloiseann an páiste seanathair ag rá go bhfuil nasc idir an Ghaeilge agus an bochtanas agus ansin nuair a fheiceann an duine óg suíomh an bhaile . . . Istigh ansin san eastát tionsclaíochta like scoth na háiseanna, na n-áiseanna, atá ann, ach – folamh. Y'know? Níl 's agam cén céatadán atá líonta ach ní mórán é. Níl daoine óga na linne seo tiubh, tá siad níos ciallmhara ná a bhí siad riamh, is dócha an ghlúin is ciallmhara ag an aois seo. Feiceann siad an stuif seo agus déanann siad na nascanna idir fíorscéal an bhaile agus an teanga atá ceaptha le bheith anseo.*

Dorian has similarly pointed out that community self-confidence is key for “withstand[ing] pressures for ancestral language abandonment”. Citing the cases of Wales and Catalonia in evidence, she claims that economic prosperity leads to the development of a middle class with the “social self-confidence to insist on traditional identity and heritage”, although also notes that this is precisely the sort of self-confidence which minoritised language communities typically lack (1999: 12-3; see also Walsh, 2011a: 111-55). Having been impoverished and marginalised for so many years, such confidence levels were likely quite low in much of the Gaeltacht even pre-2008, with this possibly being one reason why entrepreneurship remained so uncommon in these areas even when the national economy was growing rapidly (Ní Bhrádaigh, 2007). In line with the opinions of the interviewee quoted above, however, it would seem probable that the decline in material prosperity experienced post-2008 further damaged the “social self-confidence” of those living in such communities, as well as their loyalty to the language. Section 5.4.4 offers evidence of this in the linguistic landscape and section 5.6.1 elaborates on how the state’s suppression of

community dissent throughout the crisis has also contributed to this general sense of disempowerment.

## 5.4 Tourism

As Nelde et al. (1996: 8) have observed, many of the peripheral areas across Europe which are home to minoritised language communities depend heavily on tourism, a tendency which much of the Gaeltacht follows. This is part of a wider pattern which has seen tourism developed as a key industry throughout Ireland, with it being described as “the single most important industry in the west of Ireland” in recent academic literature (Anderson et al., 2015: 78).

Although tourist numbers fell significantly post-2008 – by 18% in 2010 alone (Callaghan, 2013: 106) – by 2015 the sector was growing again, with total revenue from tourism for the year amounting to €7.7 billion. The CSO stated that 139,000 people – 7.1% of the national workforce – were employed directly in “accommodation and food service activities”, although this percentage is much higher in some areas than others, particularly in Dublin. Fáilte Ireland, the national tourist board, claimed that in total 220,000 were employed in tourism in 2015 (Fáilte Ireland, 2016a). Hoping to expand on this market, one of the five pillars of the government’s recent *Action Plan for Rural Development* is “maximising rural tourism” (Government of Ireland, 2017b: 39). One “key deliverable” of this plan is to increase overseas visitors by 12% between 2017-20 (Government of Ireland, 2017b: 2), as too was the action point “to develop a Tourism Investment and Development Strategy for the Gaeltacht” during quarter one of 2017 (Government of Ireland, 2017b: 42). As of summer 2018, however, no such strategy had been forthcoming.

Despite being a key industry in the Gaeltacht, as Herbert points out, the experience of the Celtic languages in general with tourism has historically been a rather unhappy one (2011: 419). Although typically only seasonal, large influxes of tourists inevitably alter the linguistic balance of minoritised languages’ heartland communities, increasing dominant language use significantly. As has been established in research from Wales, a key way in which such cultures are minoritised is through in-migration (see 5.5.2), and it is tourism which initially attracts the majority of immigrants to areas where minoritised languages are spoken (Phillips and Thomas, 2001: 75-6; see also Nelde et al., 1996: 38).

It is unsurprising, then, that concerns regarding tourism's cultural impact have long existed in the Gaeltacht. Well-known author Máirtín Ó Cadhain wrote in 1964 that Dún Chaoin in Kerry was at risk of becoming a tourist park rather than a community (Ó Cadhain, 1964) and later proclaimed, with typical rhetorical flair, that "[w]ith regard to tourism in the Gaeltacht, I would hang the first Bord Fáilte official that ventured west of Knocknacarragh from the nearest tree, or from the nearest *sceach* if a tree was not available" (in Ó Gadhra, 2000: 267).

While not so combative in tone, much academic literature on tourism expresses similar reservations about its implications for indigenous cultures. Denvir, for instance, himself a long-time resident in the Galway Gaeltacht, contends that

[t]ourism, by definition, is an invasive activity and not just in a linguistic or cultural sense. Community life in the Connemara Gaeltacht changes significantly during the tourist season. Those in the tourist sector and in related businesses work long hours, there are far greater numbers of people in the area and, while there is a hive of activity around, people in general are so busy that they do not socialize in the same way as during the rest of the year (Denvir, 2002: 39).

Although the expansion of the tourist sector was promoted as a way to overcome the effects of the recession – especially in areas which lost employment in construction or industry – several of my interviewees also expressed reservations about the potentially negative implications this could have for Gaeltacht culture:

*R: Athróidh sé an áit go mór, bhfuil 's a'd. Tá meon áirid ag baint leis an turasóir agus an meon sin, tá sé láidir le linn an tsamhraidh faoi láthair. Má bhíonn daoine ag tíocht i gcaitheamh na bliana, bhfuil 's a'd, is cinnte go bhfuil sé sin ag goil i gcionn ar mheon na ndaoine . . . Má bhíonn an oiread sin daoine ag tíocht i gcónaí . . . sa deireadh thiar, bhfuil 's a'd, feicfidh tú an sparán ag teacht seachas an duine.*

This same interviewee, from an island in Galway, was concerned that his community would steadily become more like a neighbouring island which receives much greater numbers of tourists, and is consequently Anglicised to a far greater degree:

*R: Feicim [ainm an oileáin béal dorais] agus cuireann sé isteach orm go mór, bhfuil 's a'd. Tá fógraí móra Béarla chuile áit – "bike hire", "hotel", "guided tours" – rudaí móra millteacha chuile áit agus, agus, ní raibh 's acu go raibh a leithéid de rud agus teanga Gaeilge ann. Agus turasóirí ag siúl thart, cineál, díomách b'fhéidir . . . "anomie" leis an bhfocal Fraincise a úsáid, an dtuigeann tú? Ansin nach bhfuil 's acub go baileach cén áit a bhfuil siad nó cén fáth agus, agus [bhí*

*siad] ag súil . . . leis an rud a chonaiceadar sa bhfógraíocht. Agus b'fhéidir go bhfuil sé sin le feiceáil ach caithfidh tú íoc isteach lena fheiceáil. Agus ní shin an cineál rud ba mhaith leat, bhfuil 's a'd, ba mhaith leat cineál eile oileáin, go mbeadh oileán ann a thaitneodh linn féin agus áit a bheadh folláin le maireachtáil ann agus le clann a thóigeáil ann. Agus níl 's a'm ab é an bealach sin atá muid ag goil.*

A Donegal islander I talked to worried about a similar issue, saying “*tá súileas agam go bhfuil mé ciotach ach ‘sé an dearcadh atá agam ó shin go bhfuil an t-oileán seo ag éirí cosúil le áit fá choinne cuairteoirí*”. Important as tourism may be in economic terms, as an informant from the nearby mainland community stated bluntly: “*ní shábhálfaidh turasóirí an teanga, tá siadsan ag fágáil*”.

Further to promoting the use of English in commercial sectors, tourism can also significantly affect language practices amongst local children. Indeed, on one memorable occasion I greeted a group of children in Irish while walking past them, only to have one of them (whose family, I subsequently found out, were holidaying there) scream “don’t speak that to me!” in response. With this being unlikely to be the only time this visitor expressed such sentiments, the linguistic consequences of spreading such extremely negative language attitudes amongst the area’s youngest Irish speakers are clear.

Nonetheless, in the absence of other viable options, tourism has grown to provide the Gaeltacht with a key source of employment. Due to the deindustrialisation of much of the Gaeltacht post-2008 (5.3.2), one of my interviewees in Donegal felt that it was more important than ever that tourism be developed in the area:

*S: [S]ílim gur féidir le eacnamaíocht iarthar na hÉireann a fhorbairt an dóigh atá muid ag dul anois, cé go bhfuil sé fadálach. Níl aon réiteach ach cúrsaí iascaireachta, cúrsaí bia, cúrsaí biamhara, cúrsaí turasóireachta, cúrsaí spórtuisce. Agus nuair a amharcann tú síos ar Daingean agus siar ón Daingean [i gCiarraí] déarfadh tú leat féin is eiseamláir millteanach maith é seo de cheantar atá beo agus atá bríomhar agus a bhfuil fuinneamh ann agus daoine ag teacht isteach ann . . . Tá go leor againn i nDún na nGall. So ab é gurb é cuid den réitiú ná an dóigh, na rudaí atá muid ag déanamh faoi láthair? Tá súil agam gurb ea. Mar caithfidh sé bheith préamhaithe sa timpeallacht agus sa teanga agus sa chultúr agus san fharraige, mar sin iad na buairimh atá againn.*

According with such sentiments, many of those I spoke to felt that the *Wild Atlantic Way*, a marketing campaign launched in 2014 by Fáilte Ireland to attract visitors to the

west coast, was a very positive development which could potentially be of great benefit to the Gaeltacht in years to come.

In addition to obvious economic benefits, tourism can also be of psychological support to peripheral communities. As Brody explains, tourists can help validate rural ways of life for the locals themselves, offering “reassurance and approval” to populations that may otherwise feel disadvantaged and inferior compared to residents of the developed urban core (1974: 40).

Such is the dependency on tourism in several of the areas in which I conducted my fieldwork, however, that numerous informants commented on the risk created by this lack of economic diversity. One woman in Galway explained the constitution of the local economy as follows:

*E: Is turasóireacht uilig cheapfainn a bhun agus a bharr anois . . . Scríos an tAontas Eorpach . . . an t-iascach. Agus i ndáiríre chuirfeadh sé faitíos ort dá ngabhadh rud amháin mícheart ó thaobh na turasóireachta dhe...*

*B: Bheadh sibh cailte?*

*E: Go dona.*

In areas with such a low level of economic diversity, even a sustained period of bad weather during the tourist season can lead to a significant fall in visitor numbers, as too could international economic or political disruptions – Brexit, for instance. Accordingly, one of my interviewees in Donegal was very sceptical about over-reliance on tourism: “[a]n bomaite a stopann an turasóireacht, má tá na daoine bocht an chéad lá eile bhuel ní raibh fuck all ann really ar scar ar bith”.

Despite the perhaps excessive level of dependence on this sector, tourism is extremely important to both the Galway and Donegal Gaeltachtaí, as explained in the following sections. As will be seen, however, there are significant contrasts between the two counties, with this distinction being largely the product of geographical centrality/peripherality.

#### **5.4.1 Tourism in Galway**

With Galway city being heavily integrated into the national tourist trail, it receives a very large number of visitors, particularly during the summer. While this generates

considerable knock-on benefit to some of the areas west of the city, much of the Gaeltacht, particularly more remote areas, sees relatively few tourists. As an interviewee from one of the strongest Irish-speaking areas on the west coast told me:

*D: Tá go leor den turasóireacht i dtuaisceart Chonamara, sa gceantar Béarla . . . mar séard a tharlaíonn go dtéann na busannaí siar . . . as Gaillimh agus téann siad go Kylemore abbey [taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht] agus ansin ólann siad an cupán caifé agus bíonn siad ar ais [sa gcathair] in am le haghaidh dinnéir, dinnéar tráthnóna. Sin nó téann siad go Ros a' Mhíl agus téann siad amach ar thuras go hÁrann. An turasóireacht atá againne níl sé mór ach tá sé roinnte níos fearr, agus sin na coláistí Gaeilge . . . [Ach] fiú ann féin, ní shábhálfaidh an turasóireacht ceantar ar bith, an dtuigean tú, ann féin. Is cúnamh é ceart go leor.*

The summer Irish colleges referred to in this extract are discussed in 5.4.3.1 below.

As alluded to by this informant, the Oileáin Árann receive huge numbers of visitors each year. These islands have a much higher profile in the national consciousness than any of the islands in Donegal – largely due to their proximity to other major tourist attractions, but also the literary heritage associated with the area. Such is the strength of Oileáin Árann's tourist industry that it left them better off than much of the mainland Gaeltacht during the recession, despite them being more difficult to reach. As is pointed out in the Galway County Council *Gaeltacht Local Area Plan 2008-2018*:

[t]he decline in the traditional occupations of fishing and agriculture, and the dramatic rise in year round tourism have been the significant factors influencing the island community in recent years. The general decline in population has not been as dramatic as some western districts of the Conamara Gaeltacht and the improved transport services of the ferry companies and [the air service have] made access to mainland facilities, including national and international travel routes [possible] (Galway County Council, 2008, revised 2013: 48).

While a certain number of tourists visit throughout the year – as the above quote mentions – during winter and autumn these are almost all day trippers, with most accommodation being closed at this time. The tourist season on these islands, I was often told, begins in March and continues until late September. Although numbers tend to be low in the early part of the season, during a visit to one of these islands in April 2016 I observed a definite increase in the number of tourists arriving compared to my previous visit in December 2015. By mid-summer numbers swell enormously. While I was staying on one of these islands in July 2016 there was up to 2,000 people visiting daily. Although many were day trippers, it is nonetheless a huge influx for an island

with a population of well under 300. Indeed, there was discussion on RnaG during my stay about there possibly being “too many” tourists visiting the island, with local infrastructure at risk of being overwhelmed.

As described by a woman who runs a small tourist-focused business on the island I stayed on, the surge in tourism during the summer sustains the island financially for the rest of the year, when very few visit the area, and meant that the effects of the recession were not felt too severely there:

*C: Ar an gcarraig, tá sé sin coinní’ sách réasúnta. Tá sórt forbairt inmharthana ansin ar bhealach mar gheall ar an séasúr turasóireachta agus cuidíonn an turasóireacht go mór leis an áit a choinneáil mar atá sé.*

Indeed, such is the amount of work available during the summer that migrant workers come to the island. While these are often from other parts of Ireland (friends or relatives of the business owners), eastern European workers have also availed of these opportunities, with many of the islands’ businesses functioning through English in order to accommodate non-local workers.

While on this same island in Galway over successive summers I also witnessed young adults who were home from university for the summer being asked to work multiple jobs simultaneously, with several finishing a day’s work in one establishment before going straight to work in another. The manager of a local arts centre described the summer employment situation for young people as follows: “*an beagán acu atá fágtha bíonn muid uilig ag iarraidh orthu rudaí difriúla a dhéanamh, so faigheann siad achan seort jab*”.

This was a striking counterpoint to national youth employment trends, which showed the unemployment rate amongst young adults to be double the national average at the time of these interviews in 2015:

[o]verall employment is rising, even if it is patchy. But not for young people. For young people, the jobs recession continues apace . . . Employment grew by 2.2 percent overall. But for young people – between 20 and 34 years – it fell by 1.5 percent. Among older groups – over 50s – employment grew by 5 percent. Since the crisis began, employment has fallen by 10 percent. However, for those aged 20-34, employment fell by a third. For other age groups, employment has recovered and increased – with employment among 50s and over increasing by 14 percent (Taft, 2015).



While tourism provides vital opportunities for the local population, this seasonal engagement, when combined with the social welfare payments collected during the off-season, provides an adequate income and means people are often reluctant to work in other sectors of the economy. “*Déanann roinnt . . . a gcuid airgead sa samhradh agus téann siad a chodladh sa ngímhreadh*”, as a local business owner told me.

Similarly, another informant discussed a part-time, minimum wage job with the local co-operative that was being advertised at the time of our interview:

*E: Ach ní gheobh’ tú duine, sin é an fhadhb eile atá a’ainn . . . Tá chuile dhuine chomh tógtha suas. Mar tá tú in ann a bheith ag tarraingt leasa sóisialaigh . . . agus ag obair sa tionscal turasóireacht. Ach is dóigh go ndúnann an Roinn [Leasa Shóisialaigh] a súile leis sin mar muna ndéanfadh bheadh an t-oileán go dona agus is amhlaidh go mbeadh sé ag costú níos mó ar an stát ar deireadh.*

Although I heard that the recession did lead to a decline in tourists coming from abroad, it saw an increase in tourists visiting from within Ireland, as financial constraints meant that Irish people, having grown accustomed to holidaying abroad during the Celtic Tiger, began to holiday at home more. A woman who works in a craft shop explained this “staycationing” phenomenon:

*E: Ní dhéarfainnse go bhfuil an oiread sin Meiriceánaigh ag teacht le cúpla bliain . . . Ar bhealach an bhliain a raibh siad ag rá linn go raibh an tír an-dona b’shin é ceann de na blianta is fearr a bhí againn. Ó thaobh na háite ag díol ceardaíochta de b’shin í an bhliain ab fhearr í. Agus ó shin tá sé ag feabhsú, ach roimhe sin bhí muid ag díol fíorbheagán. Bhí sé ar nós go raibh Éireannaigh ag rá siod í an tír s’a’ainn féin agus tá muid le goil ar thuras in Éirinn.*

While dependence on tourism undoubtedly leaves local economies at the mercy of external shocks that could lead to a decline in visitor numbers, the prosperity brought to those areas which receive large numbers of visitors is undoubtedly most important. Furthermore, although often linguistically problematic for the reasons discussed above, tourism in Galway has stimulated investment in infrastructure that has not happened in Donegal, particularly on those islands I visited. A small fleet of relatively large and modern boats owned by two different companies service the Oileáin Árann with as many as eight trips a day from two different mainland locations during the summer. While one of these companies is in receipt of state subsidy, the other is run as a private enterprise capitalising on the large number of tourists travelling to the area

each year. As the following section describes, such provision is in stark contrast to the service available to the Donegal island where I conducted some of my fieldwork.

Significantly, despite the largest of the Oileáin Árann receiving some 100,000 visitors per year (Galway County Council, 2013: 8), it experienced a 9.8% population loss during the 2011-16 period. While certainly better than it not existing at all, the tourist sector is typically characterised by poor quality and low-paid employment (Eurostat, 2015), with such a decline highlighting the importance of creating attractive employment which adheres to the conceptions of success that many people nowadays hold (see 5.3.4 and 5.5.1).

#### 5.4.2 Tourism in Donegal

Although seaside towns such as Bundoran in the south of Donegal are well-known as popular tourist destinations, the county in general, particularly the Gaeltacht in the north, is further removed from typical tourist routes than any part of Galway. In 2015 some 289,000 overseas tourists went to Donegal, far less than the 1,354,000 who visited Galway (Fáilte Ireland, 2016b: 2). One of my interviewees from Donegal commented on this trend, noting that while tourism was important to his community, it is not sufficient to maintain the local population:

*S: Níl sé ar an route turasóireachta, téann siad isteach go Baile Átha Cliath, thíos Corcaigh, Ciarraí, thuas go Gaillimh b'fhéidir, Cliffs of Moher agus ansin imíonn siad aríst. Ní théann mórán suas go dtí an taobh sin den tír, agus má théann stopann siad i mBun Dobhráin. Ní théann siad thuas go dtí [an Gaeltacht] an chuid is mó den am. No like bíonn, tá, muna raibh na turasóirí ann sa samhradh ní bheadh mórán saoil ansin níos mó ar char ar bith, so tá sé ann ach níl sé róláidir ag an am céanna. Ní bheadh sé láidir go leor le daoine a choinneáil in san áit. Tá cúpla mí obair sa samhradh, sin an méid.*

When I asked another interviewee why he felt his area gets so many fewer tourists than the Galway Gaeltacht, I was told that its underdeveloped infrastructure makes it much more difficult to attract tourists:

*L: [T]á na háiseanna ann, tá an lóistín ann, tá cibé rud é . . . tá achan rud [i nGaillimh]. Ach ó thaobh an taobh seo tá infheistíocht shuntasach dáiríre le déanamh . . . Má tá muid ag caint ar dhaoine a mhealladh . . . caithfidh an infreastruchtúr a bheith ann . . . Ach aríst tagann sé ar ais ag easpa airgid. Tá iarratas ag dul isteach chuig Roinn na Gaeltachta agus níl an roinn ag ceadú airgid ná cibé rud é. So tá sé náireach nuair a smaointíonn tú air . . . Tá dream anseo go háitiúil agus tá fochoiste turasóireachta acu, tá mé féin ar an fhochoiste sin fosta agus ag iarraidh rudaí beaga a fhorbairt . . . [T]á grúpaí ann*

*atá ag iarraidh an ceantar a chur chun tosaigh ach in amanna bheadh sé chomh maith agat caint leis an bhalla ansin. Nuair a théann tú go dtí na húdaráisí sin agus deir siad yeah tá sin fíis ghalánta agus achan rud ar pháipéar but easpa creidim airgead nó easpa cibé rud atá ann.*

Several other interviewees in the area echoed this sentiment, with one woman noting the chicken-and-egg nature of the problem, whereby tourists are not only attracted to areas with adequate infrastructural provision, but also help ensure its development: “[t]á sé an-deacair turasóirí a mhealladh muna bhfuil an t-infreastruchtúr agat, cineál fáinne fí atá ansin”.

As with my time in Galway, while conducting fieldwork in Donegal I had the opportunity to spend time on a strongly Irish-speaking island. Unlike the Galway island which I visited at various times of the year, my time on the Donegal island was all during the middle of the tourist season. As in Galway, tourism provides a key source of income to the islanders. The difference with my experience in Galway was quite dramatic, however. Unlike the crowds that can be seen on the island pier in Galway on a good day in the summer, there was typically only a handful of tourists arriving on the Donegal island daily – an amount very similar, in fact, to that which I witnessed visiting the Galway island during the off season. Indeed, in 2017 visitors to the island numbered just 8,688 (RTÉ, 2018c) – with the similarly-sized Galway island receiving an equal amount every few days during the summer.

Unlike in Galway, none of my interviewees in this area observed an increased number of Irish tourists during the recession. Indeed, an owner of tourist accommodation told me that increased unemployment on the nearby mainland meant people were less likely to visit for the weekend as had been the case before the crash, something several other interviewees confirmed:

*O: [C]rowds used to come here for weekends who’d be working in places locally. And that seems to have diminished considerably . . . They would all have to go away then, maybe to England, Scotland . . . Canada or Australia, which has happened.*

The decline in tourists visiting the mainland Gaeltacht in Donegal was also severe. As 5.3.3 described, five out of six hotels in one community closed between 2010-15, with significant detrimental consequences for both the social and linguistic vitality of the

area. As another interviewee observed, these closures make the development of tourism in the area very challenging:

*C: [F]áinne fí ann, cionn is go raibh rudaí go holc dhruid na hóstáin síos, agus níl an saol sóisialta go maith . . . Níl ach teach ósta amháin ann. So dá mbeadh dream mór ann ní fhéadfadh muid iad a choinneáilt . . . Níl áit ar bith le stopadh acu.*

Similarly, the hotel on the island I visited closed in 2010. It was immediately put on the market but remained unsold for three years. Seeing one of the island's most prominent buildings left boarded up while awaiting a sale had a significant impact on community pride, I was told:

*H: [M]á tá sé foscailte cuireann sé cuma beo ar an áit. Bhí bliain ansin nuair a bhí an úinéir deireanach, y'know, nuair a bhí sé ag díol suas, [nuair] nach raibh sé foscailte agus bhí sé fiánta don oileán . . . Nuair a dhruideann rudaí síos cuireann sé cuma olc ar áit.*

Section 5.3.5.2 discusses the consequences of such closures and the attendant reduction in community pride for linguistic reproduction.

Although the mainland hotels remain closed, the island hotel was eventually bought in 2013 by a well-off retired couple who now open it for three months during the summer. While not locals or Irish speakers themselves, they have an affinity for the area and run the hotel in an attempt “to improve life on the island”, as one of them told me. Despite employing approximately ten people – mostly islanders but also some family members – the business does not have a sufficient turnover for them to pay themselves for their work there, with them keeping the hotel open “as a service to the island” rather than for financial gain.

Unlike Galway's Oileáin Árann, the Donegal island does not have an aeroplane service, despite being further away from the mainland. The one boat that serves the island (which is smaller and older than any boat serving the Galway islands) is often cancelled due to bad weather, even in the summer, with islanders occasionally having to call the coastguard to bring them necessities by helicopter after they have been cut off for several weeks.

This underdeveloped infrastructure is a source of considerable frustration to many of the islanders. As with inhabitants of the nearby mainland, they often told me that this is the main reason tourism has not flourished as it has in Galway:

*D: Muna fhaigheann muid an bád [nua], ní bheidh sé, ní bheidh an forbairt ceart ar fáil, ní bheidh an líon turasóirí ag teacht . . . Agus ní hamháin an bád ceart ach tá muid ag iarraidh an sórt céanna bád farantóireachta atá ag freastail ar [na hOileáin Árann]. Níos faide, níos compordaí...*

While this statement was made in 2015, as section 5.6.3.2 describes, 2018 saw a different company granted the tender to service this island. Far from improving the service the way the islanders had been demanding, however, this change saw a decline in its suitability, with a ferry which was widely decried as being even less appropriate than its predecessor taking over the route.

While the low numbers of visitors going to Donegal is likely one of the area's biggest draws for a certain class of visitor (Denvir, 2002: 28), its peripherality means it is difficult to envision the relative prosperity seen in parts of Galway emerging in such a remote location in the near future. As discussed in the next section, however, the promotion of linguistic tourism may offer the stronger Irish-speaking areas of Donegal an option for expanding their tourist sector in coming years.

### 5.4.3 Linguistic Tourism

As Ó Laoire explains, state efforts to promote linguistic tourism to the Gaeltacht have existed for many years (2008: 210; see also Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2008). The recently published *Action Plan for Rural Development* includes amongst its Irish-language-related aims “[c]ontinue to develop Irish language based tourism in the Gaeltacht”, and the section titled *Promoting the Irish language as a key resource* commits to “[c]ontinu[ing] to support the development of cultural tourism in the Gaeltacht by administering the Irish Language Learners [sic] scheme” (Government of Ireland, 2017b: 42, 52).

Despite these laudable goals, with the significant exception of the *coláistí samhraidh* (see 5.4.3.1) focusing on teenagers, linguistic tourism currently makes up only a small proportion of the overall total. While now dated, an unpublished study commissioned by ÚnaG in 1999 stated that linguistic tourism to Conamara comprises only 3% of total annual visits (in Denvir, 2002: 34). This very much accords with my own observations

– I was repeatedly told in both Galway and Donegal that adult linguistic tourists are not at all common. One interviewee in Donegal said the following to me regarding the use of Irish with tourists:

*S: Thiocfadh leat “conas tá tú?” [mar a bheadh ag daoine le Gaeilge na scoile] a rá le 300 duine ag teacht isteach ón mbád sin agus is ar éigean go dtuigfeadh cúigear thú, níos lú arís má tá tú ag ráit “caidé mar atá tú?” [an leagan atá sa gcanúint áitiúil].*

He went on to state that “*mothaíonn tú mar amadán má labhrann tú Gaeilg agus muna dtuigeann daoine thú*”. As well as illustrating attitudes towards Irish amongst tourists that visit the island commonly referred to as the strongest Irish-speaking community in Donegal, this rather downhearted sentiment is also very indicative of the language’s standing vis-à-vis English, the lingua franca of tourism and, therefore, economic prosperity.

#### **5.4.3.1 Summer language schools**

While few adults visit the Gaeltacht for linguistic purposes, one area in which linguistic tourism does indeed flourish in much of the Gaeltacht is in the provision of summer courses for teenagers. For over one hundred years *coláistí samhraidh* (“summer colleges”) have brought large numbers of secondary school students to Gaeltacht communities and provided a significant source of income thereto, particularly to women, who are otherwise marginalised by the traditional economic structure of rural Ireland (Denvir, 2002: 48).

Those who attend such courses, which are far from inexpensive, are likely to have parents or guardians with above-average incomes and as a result they constitute a valuable target market for Gaeltacht communities to capitalise on. Fees for a three-week long course including accommodation with a local family generally cost in the region of €1,000. As well as these fees and the money students spend in local businesses during their stay, it is commonplace for parents to come and visit at weekends, often staying overnight in local accommodation, thereby contributing further to what is typically an otherwise depressed local economy.

Many of my interviewees commented on the importance of these courses to their areas, particularly in Galway. The following quote is representative of many others:

*G: Murach na Gaeilgeoirí [.i. lucht freastail na gcoláistí] ní bheadh tada [sa gceantar]. Aisteach go maith, tá sé sin suimiúil, bhí mé ag caint air, bhí mé thiar Dé Domhnaigh ag geallta bád seoil agus bhí seanleids, gang ina suí ar chlaí agus ag breathnú amach ar na báid. Ach bhí [ainm coláiste] díreach anseo ach bhí tuismitheoirí na nGaeilgeoirí á mbailiú le goil abhaile, is dóigh go raibh an cúrsa críochnaí'. Agus bhí siad ag rá murach na Gaeilgeoirí nach mbeadh tada san áit. Agus tá an ceart acub . . . Thiocfadh corrrthurasóir ach níl an turasóireacht [mór].*

A language planner in Galway claimed the industry is worth some €20m to the Gaeltacht per annum, a figure also given by Conradh na Gaeilge (2017: 6-7):

*N: Is fiú, cheapfainn féin, thart ar €20 milliún in aghaidh na bliana. Is 11,500 gasúr a thagann ag na coláistí Gaeilge, taobh amuigh den Acadamh agus na rudaí [do dhaoine fásta]. D'fhéadfadh muid a rá go bhfuil luach thart ar 2,500 in aghaidh an ghasúir. Íocann siadsan 900, íocann an Roinn as an lóistín, so tá ráta in aghaidh na hoíche ann. Déarfainn go bhfuil thart ar 2,000 an pháiste [agus na tuismitheoirí a thagann ar cuairt] ag fanacht i lóistín, ag ceannach peitрил, ag ithe béile leis an ngasúr. Tá sé éascaí na sumannaí a dhéanamh. 11,500 méadaí ar 2,000. Ar a laghad 20 milliún.*

Indeed, one woman felt that the income available from these courses is so significant that it means there is little incentive to develop other aspects of the tourist industry in the way that has happened in nearby English-speaking areas:

*R: Bhíodh mise ag cur ceist ar dhaoine cén fáth nach bhfuil cúrsaí turasóireachta forbartha go mór sa nGaeltacht anseo i gConamara Theas i gcomparáid mar shampla leis an gClochán nó áiteacha ó thuaidh. Agus fear as Conamara a bhí ag obair liom dúirt sé "sure cén fáth a ndéanfaidh siad é sin nuair atá siad in ann 20 nó 30,000 a dhéanamh leis na Gaeilgeoirí sa samhradh?" Agus dúirt mé "an bhfuil siad i ndáiríre in ann an oiread sin airgid a dhéanamh?!" Agus dúirt sé "tá".*

While the economic benefit of such colleges is clearly most significant, their linguistic consequences are also of immense importance:

*S: [N]í hamháin go dtugann sé airgead isteach ach tugann sé spreagadh freisin ó thaobh na Gaeilge dhó. Clann atá ag coinneáil gasúr, mar a déarfá, tuigean siad sin go bhfuil buntáiste ann go bhfuil Gaeilge sa gceantar, agus Gaeilge acub féin.*

The recession led to a significant decline in attendance at these colleges, however. I had the opportunity to interview an employee of the organisation which oversees the industry and ask him about this:

*B: Céard faoi na coláistí samhraidh mar sin, raibh aon athrú ar na huimhreachaí nó ar leagan amach na gcoláistí?*

*P: Caithfidh mé a rá go raibh. Feictear dom go raibh titim thubaisteach, dáiríre. Agus ar bhealach go raibh an earnáil seo i mbaol in áiteachaí éagsúla. Is minic a bhímse ag caint le lucht coláistí eile agus feicim go mbíonn na fadhbanna céanna le sonrú ag chuile dhuine. Nuair a iarann tú is dóigh idir 800 agus €1,000 ar dhuine le freastal ar chúrsaí trí seachtainí, nuair a thit an tóin as an tír b'shin é an chéad rud a thit as pócaí na ndaoine . . . Bhí muid buailte go tubaisteach.*

This decrease created significant difficulty for communities that had grown largely dependent on this income. The overall reduction of 25% in attendance nationally between 2008-14 masks an even greater rate of decline in certain areas – with the drop of 37% in Donegal, for instance, being significantly higher, possibly due to the county's peripherality making it costlier to travel to (Tuairisc.ie, 2014b). After such a dramatic fall during the worst years of the recession, attendance figures for 2016, while improving on those of recent years, were still, on average, 7% below 2008 levels (Tuairisc.ie, 2017n).

Despite these courses being the most successful language-based industry in the Gaeltacht, they are still heavily dependent on state support. The *mná tí* ("housewives") who host students receive a subvention from the department responsible for the Gaeltacht. This allowance, *Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge* ("Irish-learners' scheme"), is paid per pupil per night and increased in accordance with inflation from 1997-2007, at which point it remained stable at €10.50 per student per night until 2010. It was cut to €10.00 in 2010 and then to €9.50 in 2011, the rate recommended by *An Bord Snip Nua* (see 4.2.1). It was frozen at €9.50 for six years, but was increased for the first time in a decade to €10.00 in April 2017, although a return to pre-recession levels was ruled out in 2018 (Tuairisc.ie, 2017n, 2018g). These reductions, coupled with the substantial drop in student attendance at the colleges, saved the State over €2m per annum, but were reported to have cost the Gaeltacht in the region of €10m when the decline in associated spending by students and parents was included (Tuairisc.ie, 2014b). While further cuts to the sector were recommended by *An Bord Snip Nua*, *Guth na Gaeltachta* (see 5.6.1) was largely successful in resisting these proposals.



Although providing one of the only significant sources of tourism in many Gaeltacht communities, on the Galway island I visited, which receives huge numbers of visitors regardless, the island's one summer college for teenagers has a less visible – although still not negligible – impact. On the Donegal island no such college exists, a fact that frustrates local business owners, who feel a valuable market is not being capitalised on.

Despite such frustrations, no steps have been taken to establish such a college on the island – which is somewhat surprising considering the nearby mainland has colleges that are over a century old. A narrative I regularly heard regarding summer colleges in various parts of the Gaeltacht, however, was that they were not originally founded by locals, but rather by university lecturers, teachers or Irish-language groups from elsewhere in the country. As noted by Deprez, writing about a Gaeltacht island in Donegal, “the initiative [there] comes from the outside” (2000: 470). Furthermore, the teachers in these colleges are rarely locals, although it is still not clear why revitalisation advocates ignored this island and not other areas nearby. While this is quite probably a sector that could be developed on the island, it would take someone with a strong entrepreneurial drive, something that has historically been slow to emerge in the Gaeltacht (Ní Bhrádaigh and Murray, 2006). Such an individual would also have to be very confident in their level of Irish, particularly its written form – which not many Gaeltacht residents are, according to all accounts I have heard. Low rates of literacy in Irish amongst Gaeltacht residents are well reported in the literature and have long been noted as a challenge to revitalisation efforts (Ní Mhianáin, 2003).

As such, it seems unlikely that an enterprise of this sort will be developed on a significant scale on the Donegal island I spent time on. Nonetheless, in 2015 and 2016 the local co-operative did indeed provide the impetus for a week-long course directed at fluent adult speakers in which I took part, and which has continued to occur each year since. Notably, however, the course was organised by a language school based elsewhere in Donegal, which had been invited to run the course at the request of the co-operative in order to bring visitors to the island. While this presumably meant that much of the profit from the course itself left the island, it was nonetheless successful in attracting more than 20 diligent Irish speakers who contributed to the local economy over a week when visitor numbers to the island would otherwise most likely have been

almost negligible. While islanders led several afternoon activities, none of the teachers were from the island.

On the much busier Galway island the impact of the courses for adult learners that I have taught each year since beginning this PhD is far less visible. As with the teenagers attending similar courses, those adults visiting the island for explicitly linguistic purposes get submerged in the greater throng of non-linguistic tourists. Here too almost all of those involved in teaching were not islanders. While having 30 Irish learners spending a week on an island with a small population is not insignificant, this number becomes much less striking when there are some 2,000 visitors arriving daily. With such a large majority of tourists seemingly having little interest in Irish (see 5.4.3), it is unsurprising that the dynamics of local, tourist-dependent economies would quickly become associated with the use of English.

#### **5.4.4 The linguistic landscape – shifting terrain**

One area in which the linguistic consequences of both tourism and, it would seem, the recession, were particularly clear is the “linguistic landscape” (Gorter, 2006) of some of the communities in which I conducted my fieldwork, with notable changes having occurred therein in recent years. Despite the relative strength of Irish in these communities, and despite legal stipulations requiring many official signs to be monolingually Irish in the Gaeltacht (Government of Ireland, 2003), the linguistic landscape of most of these areas is dominated by English. This in itself is not overly surprising, with minoritised languages – even in their “heartlands” – often being excluded from those symbolic spaces associated with higher and commercial registers. Of particular interest in the context of this thesis, however, are the clear moves towards the bottom-up Anglicisation of this domain which were visible throughout the duration of my fieldwork, and which were reported by several informants to have accelerated as a direct result of the recession.

The example in figure 5.1 of a hotel photographed in Galway in 2015 and again in 2016 provides a particularly clear example of this process. As can be seen, this establishment, which is one of the main sources of accommodation for visitors in the area, went from displaying a sign which was almost entirely in Irish in 2015, to a monolingual English one by the time I returned to the island in 2016. Even the owner’s name, obscured in these images, was translated to English in the new sign. While I

have often heard committed native Irish speakers using both the English and Irish versions of their names, the depth of such a symbolic move is nonetheless quite striking.



Figure 5.1 A hotel in Galway, photographed first in 2015 and then again in 2016



Figure 5.2 A restaurant in Galway, bilingual in 2012 but English only in 2014 (photos taken from Tripadvisor.com)

Figure 5.2 displays a restaurant, also in Galway. The owners, a married couple, one of whom married into the community many years ago and has not learned Irish, are heavily involved in community development initiatives. Despite the Irish-speaking partner being familiar with the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* and criticising it heavily in casual conversation with me, they rebranded their formerly bilingual restaurant name in English only in recent years – something I was told about by a friend of mine from the area who is employed in the language sector.

One of my interviewees claimed that this development was something which began during the recession and was linked to tourism:

*B: Cén fáth an bhfuil 's agat gurb é Béarla ar fad atá [ar na comharthaí go léir]?*

*P: Tá sé tosaithe anseo anois fiú sna daoine atá ag iarraidh Gaeilge a choinneáil. Feicim iad ag cur suas anois – thosaigh sé ag tarlú le cúig bliana anois go díreach – ag cur suas fógraí i mBéarla amháin agus go bhfuil sé níos éifeachtaí, gur Béarla atá ag cuid is mó de na cuairteoirí nó go bhfuil sé níos fusa. Tá siad ag ceapadh nach bhfuil sé ag déanamh aon dochar agus go bhfuil siad ag cur dallamullóg orthub féin nó ag ceapadh go, nach bhfuil an teanga i mbaol dáiríre agus níl i gceist ach an samhradh dáiríre, nach raibh sí a'ainn i gcónaí ariamh agus nach raibh roinnt Béarla san áit i gcónaí ariamh agu- agus cén dochar agus, is dóigh. Ach goileann sé orm.*

As noted in 5.4, the link between tourism and English is particularly evident on one of the other islands in Galway that sees an enormous flow of tourists. The main village on this island, probably the most developed settlement of any Gaeltacht island, contains many large and seemingly prosperous businesses, although Irish is hardly more visible there than it would be in any small town elsewhere in Ireland.

With tourism being so central to the economy of many Gaeltacht communities, it is unsurprising that locals felt the need to facilitate visitors in whatever way possible in light of the tumultuous economic situation of recent years, as an employee of a state-funded language promotion body suggested:

*P: Tá sé brónach ar bhealach mar is cuimhneach liomsa a bheith ann agus bhíodh Gaeilge ar chuile rud agus chuile chineál comhartha siopa is i nGaeilge a bhí sé, ach le linn dom bheith cineál ag taisteal [tríd an gceantar] just thug mé faoi deara go bhfuil go leor comharthaíocht Bhéarla ann. Agus, y'know, bhí sé an-, bhí sé uaigneach agus brónach ar bhealach, an dtuigeann tú, gur tharla sé de léim . . . taobh istigh de deich mbliana.*

*B: Céard is cúis leis sin meas tú?*

*J: Bhuel feictear dom, y'know, go gceapann daoine, go bhfuil sé dírithe ar na turasóirí agus orthu féin. B'fhéidir go bhfuil easpa misnigh nó mórtais nó muinín atá ann agus go gceapann siad go gcaithfidh siad cineál iad féin a dhíol trí Bhéarla. See nuair a thit an tóin ar bhealach as na Gaeilgeoirí a bheith ag goil [go dtí na coláistí samhraidh] . . . bhí an cineál t-athrú seo ag teacht isteach i gcloigeann na ndaoine.*

*B: Caithfidh muid rud eicintí a dhéanamh.*

*J: Yeah, yeah. Agus níl lucht Gaeilge ag teacht chugainn níos mó, níl na postanna...Agus y'know is rud cineál teibí é ach . . . téann sé i bhfeidhm ar*

*dhaoine, cinnte téann sé i bhfeidhm ar dhaoine. Y'know tá go leor de na dreamannaí agus go leor de na siopaí sin, tá 's agam go bhfuil Gaeilge ag lucht an tsiopa agus is Gaeilge a labhrann go leor acu. Níl mé ag rá gur Gaeilge a labhrann chuile dhuine acu ach tá 's agam gur Gaeilge a labhrann go leor acub sa mbaile. Tá mé ag ceapadh go bhfuil sé psych-, sa psyche is dóigh ar bhealach.*

As this interviewee notes, the combination of the dramatic decrease in income from the summer colleges (see 5.4.3.1) and the decline of the ÚnaG-supported industrial sector (see 5.3.2), saw the economic basis of many Gaeltacht communities removed. This disruption, it seems, contributed to a sense of Irish not having a significant impact on local economic welfare and therefore prompted, at least in part, this turn away from the promotion of the language in such clearly visible ways.



*Figure 5.3 An official sign modified to include English*

While language activism in the Gaeltacht over the last fifty years has often included painting over English-language signs (TG4, 2004), figure 5.3, taken on a Donegal island, provides an example of English being added unofficially to the linguistic landscape.

Significantly, the handwriting in which this DIY-Anglicisation is done is unmistakably that of the elected local community representative on this island. This same individual is extremely pro-Irish in his rhetoric, regularly being heard in the Irish-language media and attending events related to the language. As well as being a vocal proponent of Irish, he is also very forceful in his views regarding island development, feeling that his island has been neglected by the authorities. He frequently discusses the need for improved infrastructure and comments on the lack of employment as being an issue

of major concern. As a result of these beliefs, it is perhaps less surprising that he would attempt to facilitate tourists as much as possible through making such a sign intelligible to non-Irish speakers, even though the lighthouse mentioned is clearly visible from almost everywhere on the island.

It would seem unlikely that this marginalisation of Irish in the linguistic landscape concurs with the desires of tourists, at least some of whom are surely attracted to these areas due to their perceived cultural “otherness” and indigeneity, of which the language is a key component (Denvir, 2002: 28). Such changes, however, reflect the long-established link between commerce and English. This oft-referenced association has been a key factor in driving language shift over several centuries:

[t]he conviction that Irish was a badge of backwardness and poverty, or, at least, that English had certain economic advantages over it, which seized a great part of Gaelic-speaking Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has never been completely eradicated and remains to some extent in the Gaeltacht today (Ó Huallacháin, 1991: 124).

While the impact of symbolic actions such as these on community language use is a matter for debate, they nonetheless provide a vivid example of the ongoing minoritisation of Irish in even its strongest communities. They also afford us an insight into an ideology which clearly has a certain currency in these communities and sees Irish and commercial enterprise as being contraindicated. This ideology was apparently strengthened due to the recent crisis – a finding which starkly contrasts with Brennan and Costa’s (2016) discussion of the use of Irish as part of a strategy of “de-homogenisation” outside of the Gaeltacht during the recession.

## **5.5 Migration**

With population mobility being a fundamental trait of globalisation (Appadurai, 2005: 3; Gibson, 2012: 475-6) and economic disruptions being known to intensify this mobility, it is unsurprising that Ireland saw extremely high rates of outmigration in the wake of the crash. Examining national patterns post-2008, Glynn and O’Connell state that “[w]hereas 245,900 people left the country in the eight years between 2000 and 2007, nearly 610,000 departed between 2008 and 2015” (2017: 299). As Glynn et al. (2013: 29-30) have explained, the distribution of emigrants’ origins during the recession was heavily skewed towards rural areas such as the Gaeltacht. When one considers that the demographic submersion of minority language speakers as a result

of both out- and in-migration is often cited as a major factor contributing to language shift (e.g. Krauss, 1992: 6), the potential for this development to negatively impact the vitality of Irish becomes apparent. This section will explore how this has been the case in the years since the crash occurred.

### **5.5.1 Outmigration**

Since the earliest days of the Free State, chronic underdevelopment meant that emigration was a fundamental fact of rural Irish life (Ó Riagáin, 1997: 217). This phenomenon was particularly prevalent in the Gaeltacht, its constituent communities being amongst the most peripheral in the country. Indeed, throughout the 1950s and 60s over two thirds of young people in na Gleannta, an Irish-speaking area in Donegal, had emigrated before they reached their thirties (Glynn et al., 2013: 7). Many other Gaeltacht areas were similarly depopulated at this time (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 174).

Faced with such a massive haemorrhage of population, and in accordance with the national move away from the protectionist policies of earlier decades, Gaeltarra Éireann (succeeded by ÚnaG in 1979) set about a programme of “saving the Gaeltacht by industrialisation” (Ó hÉallaithe, 2004: 174). As has been well attested in the literature, however, such efforts ultimately impacted negatively on language use. Further to encouraging both the in-migration and commuting of people from outside the Gaeltacht who were also searching for employment, there was also a significant amount of *return*-migration of people who had left in earlier years and who often brought non-Irish-speaking partners and children with them on their return (Ó Murchú, 1993; Walsh, 2010; 5.3.4).

Emigration from the Gaeltacht, then, is long-established, and during the recession this legacy led to the rekindling of chain migration patterns. The chain migration phenomenon has been observed by migration scholars for many years, with it being claimed that “so long as there are people to emigrate the principle cause of emigration is prior emigration” (Peterson, cited in Brody, 1974: 7). Being such a central part of life for generations of Gaeltacht people, this pattern means that many (if not most) of those in the Gaeltacht today already have family connections in more economically dynamic areas of the world, thus making moving abroad an appealing option during challenging times. Several of my interviewees commented on this:

*S: D'imeodh daoine ar imirce an-éasca. Tá sé i bhfad níos éasca do dhaoine as an áit seo dul ar imirce go Meiriceá mar gheall go bhfuil gaolta acub thall ann – col ceathrachaí, uncalachaí, aintíní – níl siad ag dul go áit nach bhfuil aithne acub ar éinne, mar a déarfá. Agus de ghnáth má théann siad ann b'fhéidir go bhfuil uncail leob a bheadh in ann post a thabhairt dhóib, nó a bhfuil aithne aige ar dhuine éigeant . . . Tá go leor imithe ag an Astráil chomh maith, ach Meiriceá tá sé an-éascaí.*

A young woman from Galway observed a similar phenomenon, albeit in an intra- rather than inter-cohort fashion:

*G: [A]n patrún a chonaic mise ansin ná abair dá n-imeodh duine amháin don Astráil agus ansin ghlaofadh sé ar na cairde a bhí sa mbaile agus gan iad ag déanamh tada agus déarfadh sé goilligí uathub anseo, craic go maith, tá an t-airgead go maith, goilligí anonn. So is grúpaí a chuaigh anonn.*

It is of little surprise, then, that the recent recession led to a significant increase in outmigration from the Gaeltacht. The vast majority of my informants explicitly linked this to the search for employment – “[tá siad] in Abu Dhabi, go New Zealand, sa Ghearmáin, sa Fhrainc, Sasain, Albain, Stáit Aontaithe. Agus there’s no doubt dá mbeadh obair ar an ghealach bheadh siad fán ghealach fosta”, as one Donegal man told me. While informants invariably mentioned unemployment as driving such departures, other research suggests that emigrants are more likely to be underemployed and/or over-qualified for their work at the time of emigration, rather than being unemployed outright (Glynn et al., 2013: 9). This is likely due to the fact that a significant initial outlay is typically required to emigrate, making it a prohibitively costly option for poorer sections of society. Trends in recent years are for people to go far afield when emigrating, to Australia for instance, which makes the move particularly expensive – especially when visa requirements necessitate having a significant bank balance as a minimum requirement for entry. This, I was told, led to a two-stage process of emigration, whereby people first moved to Britain in order to work and save the money to then move further afield, with Britain’s proximity and non-requirement of visas for Irish citizens making this initial step much more affordable. As one 26-year-old in Donegal explained when discussing migration patterns amongst his peer group:

*S: [T]á go leor acu ag obair thuas in Aberdeen fosta.*

*B: Céard a dhéanann siad ansin?*

*S: Bhfuil oil nó gas thuas ansin?*



B: Tá, ola.

S: So yeah bhí dream ollmhór as [a bhaile] ag obair thuas ansin ach sílim gur stad an obair thuas ansin fosta so bhogann siad go Sasain. Agus just yeah daoine a bhí ag obair thall in Sasain fá choinne bliain le faigh an airgead le dul go dtí an Astráil . . . Mar níl siad ábalta an airgead faigh sa bhaile le dul ag an Astráil anois. Agus na daoine atá fágtha sa bhaile, níl siad ábalta ag imeacht áit ar bith muna bhfuil airgead ag an teaghlach nó b'fhéidir ag uncail nó aunt le rá alright sure cuidigh muid leat, níl tú ábalta post a fháil anois le sábháilt an méid a bheadh de dhíth ort le dul.

Similar to Glynn et al.'s observations on recent emigration being more severe in the "most remote areas in Ireland" (2015: 7), and in line with the differential economic status of more peripheral Gaeltacht areas described in 5.2.3, I repeatedly heard that the most rural areas suffered the highest rates of emigration:

A: Tá ráta an-ard imirce agus 'sé is faide a théann tú siar 'sé is airde atá an ráta imirce . . . Má théann tú siar [go hiarthar na Gaeltachta], tá an áit bánaithe ar fad. Is beag duine óg atá fágtha . . . Aon duine singil, óg tá siad bailithe as an áit . . . Níl na ceantracha níos giorra go Gaillimh baileach chomh dona, y'know, mar tá roinnt oibre sa gcathair ag daoine. Ach fós féin tá cuid mhaith daoine imithe.

As is well documented, these areas furthest west are almost always the most strongly Irish-speaking communities (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a). As another interviewee stated: "fós is fíor na háiteacha is mó Gaeilge, 'siad na háiteacha is lú rachmais".

Those I spoke to frequently lamented such high rates of emigration as being extremely detrimental to the vibrancy of their communities, as the following quote – typical of many others – explains:

L: [N]uair a imíonn daoine tá tú ag sú nó ag tarraingt anam amach as pobal . . . Pobal a raibh creidim láidir in am . . . nuair a bhí obair agus fostaíocht agus achan rud ag dul ar aghaidh . . . Achan duine a imíonn bheireann siad píosa den phobal leotha . . . achan duine a fhágann is buille marfach don phobal atá ann, sílim. Agus an rud atá ann, tá tú ag cur le bánú na tuaithe. I mean nuair a fheiceann tú go díreach na háiteacha atá druidte . . . an méid tithe, chan amháin tithe ach áiteacha a raibh fostaíocht iontu san am a chuaigh thart. Má tá tú ag tomaint thart agus má fheiceann tú na háiteacha atá fágtha fuar, fann, folamh a raibh beocht agus solas agus b'fhéidir toit ann am amháin, déarfá leat féin nach mór an trua . . . ach mór an náire é fosta.

Beyond the search for employment, a further important factor contributing to emigration is the changing of aspirations that accompanies globalised modernity. As

noted by Deprez (2000: 464), television – and the internet, one must now add – bombards people in peripheral locations with (often exaggerated) images of all that they are missing out on in urban life, thereby luring them away from their home communities. As Brody explained, these increased aspirations can have very detrimental consequences for rural communities, ultimately meaning that “life in Inishkillane can no longer provide what the Inishkillane people want” (1974: 15). Emigration, then, becomes the natural choice for individuals living in communities which they have “lost faith in”, to use Brody’s terminology (1974: 16). The increased information flows which are responsible for such expanded conceptions of success are, of course, themselves a fundamental characteristic of globalisation (Held et al., 1999; Castells, 2000; Giddens, 2002), as too is the trend towards urbanisation which is depopulating rural areas worldwide (OECD, 2015).

Relatedly, on several occasions during my fieldwork I noted the social conservatism prevalent in some rural communities and how it contrasts with many of the more progressive images presented to young people in the media. On an island in Donegal I was struck by the large piece of graffiti in the main village reading “[name of the island] SAY NO”, a reference – in English – to the marriage equality referendum which had just been passed by overwhelming majority, although this island voted strongly against it. In the wake of such a historical vote on a national scale, such attitudes seemed all the more outdated, a fact which, I suspect, would not be lost on younger islanders, a number of whom were preparing to go to university in the autumn.

Several informants commented on the tendency for personal aspiration to prompt people to emigrate, saying that the recession was not the sole reason for emigration: “[s]in sórt caoga faoin gcéad economic. Tá daoine ag iarraidh bogadh thart anyway”. While “the lure of modernity in urban centres” (Mufwene, 2016: 134) is certainly an important factor in driving the depopulation of minority language community heartlands, the overwhelming majority of my informants nonetheless felt the recession had greatly accelerated this pattern, a contention which other research confirms (Glynn et al., 2013: 38; Glynn and O’Connell, 2017).

Despite high rates of emigration, many young people whom I interviewed had positive attitudes to their communities, with one young woman proffering the following praise for her area:

*M: Tá mise ag ceapadh go bhfuil saol maith anseo. Tá chuile rud atá uainn a’ainn anseo. Like is aoibhinn liomsa sa ngímhreadh nach bhfuil takeaways agus rudaí mar sin ann, caithfidh tú bheith sláintiúil, caithfidh tú do rud féin a dhéanamh. Tá mise ag ceapadh go bhfuil sin chomh maith . . . Tá na seirbhísí a’ainn, tá an siopa ann, tá an dochtúir a’ainn, tá na scoileannaí a’ainn, tá an páirc peile a’ainn, tá ionad liathróid láimhe a’ainn . . . Níl mé in ann cuimriú ar rud ar bith atá ag teastáil uainn.*

It is telling, however, that in spite of this recommendation, both she and her two siblings, also young adults, have all “voted with their feet” and moved to cities. It is therefore difficult not to read such a comment more as an example of the parochial pride typical of the west of Ireland and of the nostalgic gaze of someone who now spends most of her time in the city, rather than as a serious personal commitment to life in a rural community.

Although the nostalgia of departed emigrants can in some cases provoke a newfound affection for Irish among those who emigrate, as Herbert points out (2011: 409), such a positive effect is unlikely to outweigh the damage done through the reduction in the social density of speakers in the language’s core communities. With those aged 20-34 having comprised 70% of emigrants during the recession (Glynn et al., 2013: 34), the loss of this cohort most likely to form families and so bring up the next generation of Irish speakers can only be seen as most detrimental for the long-term future of Irish in the Gaeltacht (see also 5.3.3). As one interviewee bluntly observed: “*[ó] thaobh na teanga dhó, mairfidh sé sin an teanga, muna bhfuil daoine óga, cainteoirí dúchais, ag fanacht sa bhaile, sin deireadh*”.

I also was told on many occasions of the tendency for the primary breadwinner in a family to migrate (either in a conventional sense or as “commuter migrants” who spend extended periods working in cities (Glynn et al., 2013: 31)), with partners often being left at home to raise their children alone:

*A: [T]á muid ag feiceáil freisin go leor baintrí, baintrí déine go bhféadfaí a rá leob. Mná atá fanta anseo agus a gcuid gasúr, agus na fir imithe ag obair in áiteachaí eile. Bhí col ceathar liom féin ar an mbunú sin, go raibh sí féin fanta anseo . . . agus gur imigh a fear go New Zealand ar feadh bliana mar gheall nach raibh aon obair eile aigesan le coinneáil ag imeacht. Agus bhí sé féin ag cur an t-airgead abhaile, tá sé ar nós na seanlaethanta, nuair a bhíodh na seanleaid . . . ag obair i Sasana. So tá go leor dhó sin ag tarlú. Tá roinnt daoine atá ag commutáil, atá ag dul anonn is anall go Sasana, agus go dtí an Eoraip fiú, agus beidheadar ag fanacht cúpla seachtain thall agus ag teacht ar ais ansin.*

An informant in Donegal commented on this phenomenon in a very impassioned manner, being visibly moved while discussing it:

*L: Chan dóigh ar bith é sin ag teaghlaigh ar bith . . . nó athair clainne a bheith, atá thar sáile nó cibé rud é. Agus ag caint le daoine ar an ghuthán nó cibé rud é. Tá teaghlaigh atá buailte go láidir ag easpa oibre agus bheifeá ag ráit leat féin níl sin go maith do phobal ar bith. Agus tá sé, cuireann sé corraigh ort ar dhóigh, ach briseann sé do chroí fosta ar dhóigh eile.*

As well as the obvious reduction in language input resulting from one parent emigrating seasonally or commuting long distances – with long-distance commuting having greatly increased since 2008 (Western Development Commission, 2018) – parents who remain at home are likely to have less time to spend with their children as they attend to daily chores on their own. Similarly, those parents who have to work overtime and/or without holidays in order to compensate for a loss in their organisation's budget (see 5.9.1) or to be able to pay bills are all the more likely to delegate childminding duties to the sort of technologies described by many of my informants as being central to the propagation of English amongst Gaeltacht children (see 5.10). Furthermore, it is well attested in sociolinguistic literature that those who emigrate or even commute long distances are most likely to be drivers of language shift on returning to their home communities (Tabouret-Keller, 1972).

While academic literature on emigration post-2008 invariably mentions employment as having been a key factor in prompting an individual to migrate (e.g. Glynn and O'Connell, 2017), the issue of debt repayment is rarely addressed. On many occasions I was told of people having to emigrate to ensure they could service debts, as the following quote describes:

*A: [T]hug mé faoi deara an méid tithe a bhí dúnta, dochreidte. Tithe nú amach as an bpíosa. Yeah go leor, leor, leor [in iarthar Chonamara]. Bheifeá ag goil thart agus d'fheicfeá teach a bhí nú as a bpíosa agus dúnta agus geata glasáilte agus nuair a chuirfeá ceist cé a bhí anseo is dream óg a thóg an teach b'fhéidir agus a bhfuil riaráistí morgáiste orthu nó a thuig gurb é an t-aon bhealach a bhí acub le morgáiste a íoc ná imeacht agus goil ag obair in áit éicínt agus tá siad ag íoc as teach atá folamh.*

As described in 5.3.1, property bubbles are a fundamental feature of neoliberal economics, as are ever-increasing levels of indebtedness, with debt being used to compensate for the low or stagnant wages that neoliberalism offers the majority of the population (Graeber, 2014: 361-93). The enormous mortgages which prompted such

emigration are therefore themselves intimately connected to the macro-economic forces that brought about the 2008 crash, forces which ultimately left people with no choice but to emigrate in order to keep their homes from being repossessed by recently bailed-out banks.

The immense social cost of mass emigration, and the damage caused to linguistic vitality by such a disruption, is, then, intrinsically linked to neoliberalism in multiple intersectional ways. Several interviewees also linked outmigration to educational achievement, as the following section describes.

#### **5.5.1.1 Education and outmigration**

While typical narratives about emigration focus on the search for work, outmigration of young people from the Gaeltacht in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is also, I was told, very likely to be initially brought about by the requirements of gaining a third-level education. As with many developed nations, higher-level education is increasingly seen as a basic requirement for most employment in Ireland's "knowledge economy" (OLRS, 2014), a point made by an interviewee in Donegal:

*L: [F]ágann siad an mheánscoil anseo agus téann siad 'un an choláiste nó na hollscoile agus ansin imíonn siad amach as an cheantar. Faigheann siad a gcuid oideachais agus ansin le fostaíocht a fháil, bhuel, b'fhéidir go rachaidh siad go dtí an BA ach caithfidh tú máistreacht a bheith agat nó dochtúireacht sa lá atá inniu ann go díreach le goil isteach áit ar bith.*

This trend of education leading young people away from their home communities is one that Hindley observed in his 1990 work, although at that time it was primarily islanders pursuing secondary schooling on the nearby mainland that were forced to leave home for such reasons (1990: 69). Secondary level education is now available on all the Gaeltacht islands on which I conducted fieldwork, which is a source of great satisfaction amongst older islanders who remember having to leave at a very young age for boarding schools on the mainland.

The increase in numbers studying at third-level during the recession (Department of Education and Skills, 2012: 4) meant, however, that greater numbers of school leavers than ever were likely to leave their home communities in order to obtain an education (see also 5.3.4).

As was true when Hindley was writing, Gaeltacht natives who go on to get a higher level of education are unlikely to find satisfactory employment in their home communities. As one educated woman in her mid-20s from Galway explained when I asked her if she would like to live in the area she was brought up in: “[n]í bheinn sásta leis an bhfostaíocht atá ansin, ní bheadh aon rud ansin, bhuel níl ’s agam go deo, ach faoi láthair níl aon jab ann a bheadh suim agam ann”.

An 18-year-old from the same area who had recently finished school and was considering going to university at the time of our interview echoed this sentiment: “níl tú goil cúrsa a dhéanamh, níl tú goil fáil le bheith i do chócaire agus teacht amach anseo agus goil ag cócaireacht agus pá uafásach”.

The tendency for large numbers of young people to pursue higher education – which predates but was intensified by the recession – means that it is most likely to be those who do not have such educational achievements who are left in the remote rural communities that comprise most of the category A Gaeltacht (CEDRA, 2014: 30). As pointed out to me by a well-informed interviewee in Galway, this less-educated group were significantly more likely to be employed in those sectors most severely hit by the recession – with many working either in construction (which all but ceased during the recession), in small businesses (a high percentage of which closed down, particularly in rural areas), or in manufacturing plants (a great many of which moved overseas). The decline of these sectors is discussed in full in 5.3. As a result of such closures, much of the younger population of the Gaeltacht who had not already left their communities to gain higher education were forced to leave to find work elsewhere in the wake of the crash – meaning that both those with and without higher level qualifications have left these areas in recent years.

Historically, in both Ireland and Scotland the self-confidence and assertiveness gained through higher-level education by native Irish or Gaelic speakers has had an important role in driving revitalisation efforts (TG4, 2004; MacDonald, 1997: 60). Such developments are, however, dependent on there being suitable employment to entice these individuals back to Gaeltacht communities, something which is not currently the case in the majority of the areas where my fieldwork took place, with long established patterns of “brain drain” therefore likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

### 5.5.2 In-migration

As noted above, increased population mobility is a fundamental characteristic of globalisation. Consequently, the converse of the huge outmigration seen in Ireland since 2008 is a simultaneous in-migration, predominantly of people coming from significantly more deprived countries (Healy, 2015). While the number of immigrants from such areas that settle in the Gaeltacht is extremely low, it is not unusual for people to migrate from the Gaeltacht to the Gaeltacht, and the issue of in-migration as a counterpoint to wide-scale emigration is therefore one that must be addressed.

As mentioned in 5.4.1, on several occasions in both Donegal and Galway I was told of business owners in strongly Irish-speaking communities employing eastern European immigrants due to the fact that they were willing to work for relatively low pay:

*G: [S]in an cineál duine a thioctas amach anseo [tá siad ag iarraidh] ciúnas, introversion sórt, nó Lithuanians le goil ag obair sa hotel.*

*B: An bhfuil mórán Lithuanians san óstán?*

*G: Chuille bhliain tiocann daoine nú amach.*

*B: Muise, agus cén fáth nach bhfaigheann siad muintir an oileáin?*

*G: Mar tá siad in ann iad a íoc go dona agus tá siad in ann goil ag béiceacht orthu.*

While the numbers of economic immigrants in such areas is low, in many Gaeltacht communities there is a relatively large number of people who have relocated there as a lifestyle choice, as mentioned in the above extract (see also Smith-Christmas, 2014). This trend is often a by-product of the tourist sector, with immigrants of this type very frequently having initially visited these communities as tourists (Phillips and Thomas, 2001: 75-6; section 5.4).

As explained in 5.2.3, unemployment in much of the Gaeltacht is significantly higher than the national average. This fact, when combined with both the low incomes of many of those who are employed and the overinflated price of housing throughout Ireland (itself typical of neoliberal economies – see 5.3.1), means that locals are often effectively priced out of the property market, leaving existing houses to be bought by

people from outside the community. The following extract from an interview with a businessman in Galway explains this phenomenon:

*P: Tá teach ansin thiar . . . Agus bhí mo dhuine ag ceapadh, an auctioneer, go bhfaigheadh sé 145,000-150,000 ar an teach . . . Agus dúirt [an t-úinéir] cuir isteach 170,000, tá mé ag iarraidh 170,000. Díoladh é ar 270,000. Agus daoine áitiúla ní raibh an t-airgead acub lena cheannacht. 'Sé a cheannaigh é ná beirt as Gaillimh, cé go raibh dhá theach acub agus dhíol siad an dá theach. So an rud atá ag tarlú ná níl daoine áitiúla in ann cead pleanála a fháil so níl siad in ann teach a thógáil ar thalamh atá acub féin agus ansin nuair a théann siad le teach a cheannacht tá an praghas ró-ard because ní féidir pleanáil a fháil ar an suíomh atá acub agus teach a thóigeáil. Agus ansin tá an demand chomh mór, mar gheall gur mhéadaigh luachannaí tithe sa gcathair i nGaillimh chomh méid sin, má tá teach a'd i nGaillimh, agus go háirid má cheannaigh tú ag an am ceart é...*

*B: Déanfaidh tú meall.*

*P: Déanfaidh tú...exactly! Agus ciallaíonn sé go bhfuil na daoine áitiúla, go leor acub atá as obair cheana féin, diabhal mórán seans acub.*

*B: Tá siad ag fágáil dá bharr?*

*P: Bhuel níl aon rogha acub. Níl siad ag iarraidh fágáil. Tá mise breá compordach le daoine atá ag iarraidh imeacht ar feadh roinnt blianta agus cheapfainn gur rud maith é sin . . . Ach má tá siad ag iarraidh teacht ar ais go mbeadh deis acub sin a dhéanamh. Agus má tá siad ag iarraidh fanacht sa chéad áit gan imeacht thar sáile go mbeadh sin acub chomh maith céanna.*

Through this process the structural issues that militate against the creation of well-paid employment in the Gaeltacht mean that what available housing there is often comes to be owned by well-off migrants, retirees, etc. who are statistically unlikely to speak Irish (Fóram Chois Fharraige um Pleanáil Teanga, 2016: 7). Williams (2014: 244) describes a similar phenomenon in Welsh-speaking areas.

Another cause for someone to move to the Gaeltacht is exogamy, itself very often a consequence of economic restructuring (Nelde et al., 1996: 6). This was frequently noted by informants as a factor contributing to the decline of Irish in recent years, as seen in this quote from a middle-aged interviewee on an island in Donegal:

*S: Tá an teanga, seans go bhfuil sí ag fáil bháis, nó go bhfuil sí ag imeacht. Because tháinig strainséirí, tháinig cúpla duine, phós bean s'agam as Albain . . . tháinig cúpla duine mar a deirim, bean as an Rúis, tá cúpla, bean as an Fhrainc, tá traidhfil daoine a phós ar an oileán . . . Agus tá, tá – 'dé an dóigh a ndéarfá – tá sé ag cur brú ar an teanga.*



Relatedly, Holmes has observed that “[m]arriage to a majority group member is the quickest way of ensuring shift to the majority group language for the children” (2013: 65).

Despite saying that Irish was the language of her peer group, when asked whether this was the case for younger age cohorts one woman in her mid-twenties on an island in Galway also noted the Anglicising effect of in-migration:

*S: [A]nois go bhfuil níos mó daoine is dóigh ón mórthír hréis bogadh isteach ar an oileán go bhfuil níos mó páistí ann agus Béarla an teanga dhúchais atá acu . . . Agus in áit a bheith ag cur iachall ar na páistí sin Gaeilge a labhairt iompraíonn na páistí [áitiúla] ar an mBéarla, is dóigh le rudaí a dhéanamh níos éasca dóibh.*

In a community in Galway that is popular with tourists I was also told that English speakers who moved into the area and have not learned Irish, even after many years, make up a relatively significant portion of the community. As in Donegal, these are often people who have married someone from the area and who allegedly intended to learn Irish, but as time passed and the community became accustomed to interacting with them in English their dedication started to wane. One woman described this challenging situation to me as follows:

*E: Tá duine eicint i gclann chuile dhuine ag an bpointe seo goil a phósadh duine gan a bheith sórt láidir faoin nGaeilge agus, abair, ansin an chéad rud a déarfai leat “céard faoin duine sa teach a’d féin?” Tá ’s a’d. Níl mórán ar féidir leat a dhéanamh faoi . . . Ach ansin bíonn an rud pearsanta freisin, mar má phósann mac nó iníon le duine gan Ghaeilge, tá an-jab ag an duine sa mbaile a bhéas orthu a rá caithfidh tusa Gaeilge a labhairt . . . Caithfidh tú sórt am a thabhairt dhóib – sin deich mbliana, agus má chaithfidh tú 10 mbliana a thabhairt do – ar a laghad 10 mbliana – má chaithfidh 10 mbliana a thabhairt do chuile dhuine bhfuil ’s a’d le í a fhoghlaim...Ach níl ’s a’m. Is dóigh dá mbeadh plean ann. Go leor de na daoine a thagann isteach go dtí an áit – siod anois b’fhéidir nach dream a mbaineann go díreach le muintir an oileáin ach go leor acub tiocandar isteach agus ar dtús cheapadar go bhfuileadar an-dáiríre faoi agus breathnaíonn sé go mbíonn agus beidheadar ag goil chuig ranganna. Ach taobh istigh de dó nó trí de bhlianta, fiú ann dhá bhliain, beidh sé sin caite san aer – “tá muid istigh anois agus tá muid glactha leis agus is cuma”. Agus ní bhíonn a fhios a’d an é muid féin is ciontach leis, go ndeireann muid “á sure tá sibh alright”. Sórt ar dtús beidh tú ag rá “bhfuil tú ag foghlaim Gaeilge?” agus ansin tar éis scaithimh déanann tú dearmad, is beag nach bhfuil an oiread sin cleachtadh a’d ag labhairt Béarla leob nach gcuimhneoidh tú air.*

Despite there being some provision of Irish classes for such incomers in many areas in the form of the *Ionad Seirbhísí Teanga* (“language service centres”) which are

funded by ÚnaG, in accordance with other recent research I was often told that very few of those who moved to the Gaeltacht ever attain fluency in Irish – in Cois Fharraige the figure is just 20% (Fóram Chois Fharraige um Pleanáil Teanga, 2016: 6, 27). In this way, in-migration creates a steadily increasing pool of non-Irish speakers in even the strongest remaining Gaeltacht areas.

The high levels of emigration seen since 2008 have the potential for greatly exacerbating this trend in coming years. As mentioned in 5.3.4 and 5.5.1, emigrants who returned during previous periods of prosperity and brought English-speaking families often contributed to the Anglicisation of the Gaeltacht. Nonetheless, many of the children of migrants who returned in previous decades and who found themselves living in an Irish-dominant community ultimately became Irish speakers themselves. Were a similar phenomenon to occur again in coming years, however, it is unlikely that there is any community where Irish is strong enough to be able to assimilate incomers in this fashion. As one of my interviewees observed:

*É: Má imíonn siad tamallt fada agus má phósann siad daoine ansin má bhíonn siad thart anseo níl an t-infreastruchtúr ann le cuidiú leo ó thaobh na teanga – rud nach raibh ann sna seachtóidí, ach an difear atá ann anois go bhfuil i bhfad níos lú cainteoirí aontangacha [agus] pobail láidre ann is a bhí sna seachtóidí. So tá sé cosúil leis an seanrud . . . who's immersing whom?*

Rather than being able to linguistically integrate the families of returned immigrants, it would seem likely that without significant provision to address this issue, such an influx will spur local children to speak English even more than they already do (see 5.10). “Má thig siad ar ais beidh impleachtaí tromchúiseacha don teanga. Ceist ollmhór atá ann” as another interviewee stated. Despite a welcome upturn in the economy in recent years, thus far there has been no public discourse about this “ceist ollmhór”, or attempts to plan for the eventuality of large numbers of emigrants possibly returning home in coming years. Although a significant risk, none of those language plans which have thus far been completed in accordance with the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* (see 5.8) make any provisions for dealing with such a possibility – for instance by recommending an integration model similar to that in use in Wales (Ní Thuairisg, 2012).

## **5.6 Organised opposition to state policies**

Shortly after the first austerity budgets were implemented, many in the Irish media began to comment on the lack of organised resistance to these measures. In the years

immediately following the crash this apparent passivity led to the emergence of an oft-repeated assertion that “the Irish don’t protest” (Magill, 2013; Thejournal.ie, 2013b). Despite the lack of more militant actions of the type seen elsewhere in the EU at the time, by 2009 there had nonetheless been several significant mobilizations opposing the cuts, including marches of more than 100,000 people and a one-day strike of over 250,000 public servants. Various sectors of civil society mobilised in defence of their interests during this period, including pensioners, students and the parents and staff of DEIS schools for the disadvantaged. Building on an earlier failed boycott of the household tax that took place between 2011-13, during the research of this PhD a mass civil disobedience campaign defeated the imposition of water charges, which were widely understood as stealth taxes designed to facilitate later privatisation of the water infrastructure.

Despite this, resistance to state policies was undeniably more muted in Ireland than elsewhere in Europe during this period, never escalating to the point of large-scale riots or property destruction. Conservative commentators attributed popular impassiveness to the widespread acceptance of the need for fiscal restraint, combined with the legacy of Catholic deference (Irish Independent, 2012).

As Grasso and Giugni explain, however, “neoliberal contexts tend to be characterised by more individualised understandings of poverty, thus depressing protest action” (2016: 667). Furthermore, as Allen and Boyle note, “political responses to an economic crisis are shaped by the manner in which the mass of people entered it – their experience of prior struggles and the existence or non-existence of substantial left minorities” (2013: 128). The conditions in which the Irish working class entered the crisis, however, did not in any way prepare them for the challenges of combating austerity. The social partnership model of industrial relations that came to prominence throughout the Celtic Tiger saw a decline in large-scale industrial action, as disputes were dealt with by a professional managerial class employed by the trade unions. Concomitant to the adoption of this conservative, clientelist model of negotiation by the union leadership, union density more than halved between 1980 and 2007 (McDonough, 2010: 452). Combined, these developments resulted in the annual average of work days lost per 1,000 salaried employees falling enormously from 501 in 1985 to just 2 in 2011 (OECD, 2017: 1; see also Eurofound, 2002). Consequently,

by 2008 the vast majority of the Irish working class had little experience of collective action or mobilisations in defence of common causes (Allen and Boyle, 2013: 134-43), meaning the only way to create effective resistance “was to start from the ground up” (Bisset, 2015: 178), a time-consuming process, albeit one which eventually culminated in the successful water charges campaign.

Although they never had a place at the social partnership negotiating table (unlike other organisations in the voluntary and community development sectors – see Ó Murchú, 2003), Irish-language organisations nonetheless adopted a managerial lobbying strategy throughout the 1990s. They were thus arguably in an even weaker position than other sectors to defend their interests when faced with the drastic cuts described in Chapter 4. While the post-2008 period did see some important mobilisations of the Irish-speaking community, these, as will be seen, made no attempt at connecting their sectional struggles with the wider anti-austerity movements that emerged during this time.

Despite various academic commentators calling for Irish-language activists to link their efforts with those of other social justice and environmental movements (see 2.6), such an approach remained very much a minority position throughout this time, as it did before the crisis. One organisation that attempted to resist the sectionalism of mainstream language groups was *Misneach*, of which I am an active member. Due, however, to my personal involvement in this group, space constraints, and *Misneach* being a relatively small group primarily confined to the cities, this organisation will not be discussed in further detail.

While language issues remained relatively marginal, many of the national campaigns against austerity had a notable presence in Gaeltacht areas, including the anti-water charges campaign, which began in the Donegal Gaeltacht, as locals often proudly told me. There was also important localised resistance during the early years of the crisis (against the closure of post offices and health service cuts in Donegal, for instance), although the majority of these single-issue campaigns occurred before I began researching this PhD and I have only limited second-hand knowledge of them. As this thesis is premised on the interconnectedness of language vitality and wider socioeconomic issues, I am reluctant to present an overly “linguacentric” view of resistance to austerity in the Gaeltacht. Due to space constraints, however, the

following sections will focus largely on those campaigns that specifically aimed at maintaining language-focused supports, namely *Guth na Gaeltachta* and *Dearg le Fearg*. I will also discuss campaigns regarding transport links for the Árann and Toraigh islands in which I was a participant-observer. While not explicitly linked to austerity, such developments are intimately connected to the public procurement regulations of the EU, which, as Kunzlik (2013) demonstrates, are themselves deeply neoliberal, and as such are worthy of attention.

### 5.6.1 Guth na Gaeltachta

The *Guth na Gaeltachta* (“Voice of the Gaeltacht”) group, active 2009-13, was founded in Donegal in response to the recommendations of *An Bord Snip Nua* (see 4.2.1), which proposed extremely severe cuts to Gaeltacht funding. Guth na Gaeltachta explicitly aimed to resist these recommendations, although it also campaigned on the position of the language in the education system and on other language-related issues.

The group drew attention to the severity of the *Bord Snip*’s recommendations regarding the Gaeltacht, regularly appearing in the Irish-language media and organising information stalls and meetings in Donegal, Galway and Dublin (although not, to my knowledge, anywhere in Munster). In co-operation with Conradh na Gaeilge, they organised a series of lobbying days which were attended by several dozen politicians and explained the implications of the proposals to abolish ÚnaG, the department responsible for the Gaeltacht and related measures discussed in Chapter 4 (Politics.ie, 2011).

Several of my interviewees spoke of Guth na Gaeltachta with great enthusiasm, as seen in the following extract:

*L: Bhí fíís ar dóigh ag Guth na Gaeltachta. Bhí tábhacht millteanach ag baint leo. An rud a bhí ann bhí guth aontaithe a bhí ansin . . . [N]a daoine a thoisigh é bhí siad ceannródach, chonaic siad sin an gá a bhí le grúpa a d’ardódh guth ar son cearta mhuintir na Gaeltachta agus le seirbhísí a choinneáil in san cheantar anseo. Rinne siad obair fiáinta, obair mhór mhaith . . . [B]a feachtas ar dóigh a bhí ann, feachtas tras-phobail, tras-pháirtí, ní raibh baint ar bith ag páirtithe polaitíochta ann. Ón bhun aníos a tháinig sé agus bhí sé dírithe ar scoilteacha Gaeltachta agus achan rud agus bhí ionaid phobail agus bhí mná tí [ann]. Fiú cuid de na cruinnithe a raibh mé aige . . . bhí scaifte istigh agus bhí fiú atmaisféar, bhí sé go maith don spiorad, don t-anam, don duine féin a bheith*

*i do shuí istigh in seomra. Agus in amantaí bhí díospóireacht te teasaí ag dul ar aghaidh agus bhí daoine ag tabhairt amach, ach é sin ar leataobh bhí sé go maith díreach go raibh comhluadar ann agus daoine ann agus an fhís chomónta seo acu. Agus bhí daoine ag ráit, bhuel, tá muid anseo le chéile, y'know ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine, bhfuil 's agat an tseanfhocal? Agus tá ceann eile ansin "ní neart go cur le chéile" – má tá muid aontaithe tá an láidreacht sin ann . . . [Bhí muid] ag cur in éadan an Bord Snip . . . ag ráit druid seo is seo is an t-iomlán dearg!*

The group was thus clearly a valuable development for the Gaeltacht during a very difficult time. As with the Dearg le Fearg movement discussed in the following section and the state-funded language organisations, in their anxiousness to declare themselves a “non-political campaign” to avoid the influence of party politics, Guth na Gaeltachta eschewed links with comparable organisations which could have aided in building a broad-based campaign of resistance to austerity in general. This sectionalism is typical of other areas of civil society in Ireland, with there being few instances of groups that attempted to draw links between the multitude of single-issue campaigns each expressing their individual grievances (Allen and O’Boyle, 2013: 128). One former participant explained his frustration with this position as follows:

*M: [C]hreid mé go mór i nGuth na Gaeltachta. Ach ag cúpla cruinniú d’ardaigh mé an cheist, bhí siadsan in éadan ciorraithe in sa Ghaeltacht, right, in earnáil na Gaeltachta. Ach . . . thóg mise an rud gur chóir do Ghuth na Gaeltachta fanacht mar Ghuth na Gaeltachta ach a bheith páirteach sa rud níos leithne in éadan cúrsaí déine agus ciorraithe . . . [B]hí mórshiúl mór i Sligeach, agus bhí bratach mór acu, rud slachtmhar. . . [A]gus ag an chruinniú dúirt mé gur chóir go mbeadh ionadaí ó Ghuth na Gaeltachta i láthair ag an mhórshiúl. Agus dúirt siad “ó no, no, níl baint aige sin leis an Ghaeltacht, níl baint aige sin leis an Ghaeilg”. Agus dúirt mé no but tá baint aige le...Y’know tá lucht na Gaeilge iontach maith ag rá caithfidh daoine seasamh linn, agus aontaím leo, ba chóir go seasfadh daoine leis an teanga, ach nuair nach bhfuil lucht na teangan sásta seasamh le daoine eile, then tuigim do na daoine eile fosta: “caidé a rinn lucht na Gaeilg dúinn?” So an rud a bhí mise ag rá just bíodh bratach linn agus siúlfaidh muid agus look tá mise ag dul go Sligeach anyway, an bhfuil cead agam duine inteacht eile a fháil agus iompróidh an bheirt an bratach? No.*

As well as reflecting the general tendency towards the sectionalisation of social movements in Ireland, this reluctance to be seen as overtly political may result from the belief occasionally expressed by commentators that the politicisation of Irish (particularly in the North of Ireland) has been to its detriment. The fact that Guth na Gaeltachta began in Ulster, and in an area frequented by republicans seeking respite during the war, may have resulted in a heightened sensitivity to such beliefs.

Despite their sectional approach and very moderate tactics, Guth na Gaeltachta was nonetheless clearly seen as a threat by the state. Their first spokesperson, who was employed as a gardener in a national park which is under the management of a state body, received a letter from the department responsible for the Gaeltacht threatening him with dismissal from his job if he did not refrain from publicly criticising state policy. This threat proved effective, leading him to resign his role with the organisation. His successor too was similarly threatened into silence:

*S: [T]á an chuma air gurb éard a tharla ná mar gheall go raibh an cheannasaíocht ag obair le Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeltachta more or less gur dúradh leob bígí ciúin, tá muid ag brath ar Roinn na Gaeltachta agus ar Údarás na Gaeltachta ar airgead so tá bhur bpostanna i mbaol anseo so níl aon chead a bheith ag caitheamh anuas ar [pholasaithe stáit].*

Despite these threats being reported in both English- and Irish-language national media (Gaelport.com, 2012; Gaelscéal, 2013: 2), they provoked no opposition from either the wider Irish-language or trade union movements. While perhaps somewhat hyperbolic in his sentiments, one of my interviewees pointed out that the small amount of attention this case received was not proportionate to its significance:

*M: [N]uair a chuir siad an litir chuig [an chéad urlabhraí] ag bagairt é a bhriseadh amach as a phost, léirigh sé sin cé chomh imeallach is atá an Ghaeilg agus ceist na Gaeltachta in saol polaitiúil na tíre. Dá dtarlódh a leithéid in Ros Comáin nó Ballydehob, áit ar bith, go mbeadh urlabhraí grúpa pobail a bhí ag iarraidh an pobal a eagrú in éadan ciorraithe rialtais . . . de thairbhe go raibh sé fostaithe mar ghairdinéir ag an OPW, gur bhagair siad é a bhriseadh as a phost, dá dtarlódh sé sin in áit ar bith eile sa tír, bheadh na ceardchumann, bheadh an eite chlé, bheadh na páipéirí lán le altannaí, bheadh David Norris fiú, bheadh ráiteas aige! But tharla sé! D'éirigh sé as! Agus an té a ceapadh mar urlabhraí ina dhiaidh, cé go ndearna sé é gan ainm, bagraíodh eisean a bhriseadh as a phost . . . Agus cuireadh deireadh le Guth na Gaeltachta.*

This lack of solidarity from the wider Irish-language movement highlights the apprehensiveness of the state-funded language organisations to take a confrontational position at a time when they too were facing extreme rationalisation measures (see 4.2.6), and ensured the state was easily able to control a key opposition movement in the Gaeltacht during the recession.

Such fearfulness of those with careers and incomes at risk is, of course, far from unique to the Irish-language sector. The precarious nature of the employment market and the “atypical” labour conditions that exist under neoliberalism (see 5.8), coupled

with a social safety net which has been greatly reduced in recent years, make it much less likely that people will risk their livelihoods by challenging state policies (Grasso and Giugni, 2016). Further to being fundamental to the emergence of nation-states and capitalism more generally (Thompson, 1991), the suppression of dissent has been a central requirement of neoliberalism since its inception as a political project (Klein, 2007), and was notably intensified post-2008 (Bruff, 2016), including in the Gaeltacht and elsewhere in the Irish state.

The fact that many of those involved in Irish-language campaigning are employed by state-funded institutions made it particularly straightforward to limit Guth na Gaeltachta's efforts. While it is from the ranks of the middle classes often employed in the public sector that the impetus for language revitalisation has typically come (Jones, 1998: 314; MacNamara, 1971: 85; Wright, 1996: 43), such individuals – teachers, for instance – are also easily silenced when their demands come into conflict with state policies. The fact that the implementation of neoliberal measures requires the suppression of dissent therefore sees it inflict a double blow on areas such as the Gaeltacht: it both weakens the supports on which marginal communities so often depend and simultaneously punishes attempts to resist this attrition.

Containing as it did many individuals committed to the maintenance of the Gaeltacht as a distinct linguistic community, Guth na Gaeltachta may seem to fit the standard description of a post-materialist “new social movement” (Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1989). Due to the state's economic support for the Gaeltacht, however, the group also included many participants who are materially dependent on the vitality of Irish in the Gaeltacht, including those who host attendees at Irish-language summer colleges or who teach Irish in third-level institutions. As such Guth na Gaeltachta could perhaps more accurately be defined as a materialist, “survival” cause rather than one of “self-expression”, to use Inglehart's well-known typology (1997).

As well as seeing issues that communities felt worth raising at the political level totally ignored, such a response from the state destroys the sort of community initiative and self-confidence that is essential for language revitalisation (see 5.3.5.2). This was evident in the opinions of several of my interviewees, who noted the general sense of disempowerment pervading their communities. As one woman from Galway said:



*C: Is aisteach liomsa gur tharla Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta ariamh ag inseacht na fírinne dhuit, nuair a bhreathnaím ar an meon atá i gConamara anois. Airím go bhfuil an troid imí' astu uilig uilig. Cibé cén sórt, céard a bhuail na daoine óga an t-am sin, tá 's agam nach raibh mórán acub [ach] bíonn go leor [den phobal] sórt ag glacadh le rudaí mar thá le fada an lá.*

I was told of a similar state of disempowerment in Donegal:

*B: [S]ílim go bhfuil an troid cineál imithe in sa phobal, níl troid ar bith iontu . . . Sílim díreach go bhfuil, bhfuil 's agat, an pobal cineál tinn de bheith ag troid i gcónaí. Is dócha nuair a dhéantar dearmad ar – tá sin cineál drámatúil – ach nuair a dhéantar dearmad ar cheantar cad chuige a mbeadh siad ag iarraidh a bheith ag troid faoi na táillí uisce nó fiú an lá Dearg le Fearg?*

Similarly, during the writing of this chapter a RnaG presenter prompted much discussion in the Irish-language media by claiming that the people of the Gaeltacht were utterly “*cloíte*” (“defeated”), accepting of every insult and disregard from the state (Tuairisc.ie, 2018h). Although historical experiences of underdevelopment meant that Gaeltacht communities were probably already somewhat disempowered before the crash, as Cheshire and Lawrence (2005) and Harris (2014) have shown, neoliberalism, and the effects of recent austerity measures, have further disenfranchised groups that were historically marginalised. As with many issues described in this chapter, disempowerment of Gaeltacht communities has numerous causes, with the recession having exacerbated previously existing tendencies. Such disempowerment, however, clearly links to the decline in community pride described in 5.3.5.2 and the wider trend towards social atomisation that has become so profound in recent years, a phenomenon itself due in no small part to austerity and the inequality that is a fundamental trait of neoliberalism (Lancee and Werfhorst, 2011; Scharf, 2015).

It is ironic that at the same time as the state was threatening members of Guth na Gaeltachta, an autonomous Gaeltacht initiative to maintain Gaeltacht communities, the *Gaeltacht Act 2012*, which is predicated on voluntary community activism, was being enacted. As a former member of Guth na Gaeltachta told me:

*A: An teachtaireacht atá muid ag fáil ná déanaigí na rudaí seo [leis an bpleanáil teanga] ach ná bígí ag súil le aon cheannasaíocht nó aon rud uainne. In fact, b'fhéidir gur bagairt a bhfaighfeá. Sin teachtaireacht iontach láidir mar léiríonn sé do dhaoine níl an stát dul a sheasamh leat. Tá sé deacair go leor bheith mar cheannasaí . . . teanga, sílim féin. Tuigeann muid uilig é sin. 'Cause fiú sa Ghaeltacht ní hí an Ghaeilge an chloch is mó ar an phaidrín againn. So na*

*daoine atá ag breathnú amach ar son na teanga, breathnaíonn daoine orainn, in ionad a bheith ag breathnú orainn mar dhaoine atá fadradharcach agus atá ag déanamh an rud ceart . . . breathnaíonn daoine orainn mar cranks! Agus níl sin dul a chuidiú leis an mheon sin a athrú. Cén incentive atá ann do ghrúpaí pobail, nó do dhaoine aonara seasamh suas don teanga?*

The bitterness engendered by the suppression of Guth na Gaeltachta was clearly far from conducive to promoting the voluntarism the state claims to want, and which is necessary for language revitalisation, and is perhaps one further reason why an ÚnaG executive claimed that recruiting volunteers has been the most challenging aspect of the language planning process described in 5.8 below.

### **5.6.2 Dearg le Fearg**

An important development during the period covered by this thesis was the emergence of the *Dearg le Fearg* (“Red with Anger”) movement in early 2014. Organised primarily by the state-funded lobby group Conradh na Gaeilge, Dearg le Fearg began in response to the unexpected resignation of the Coimisinéir Teanga in protest at the state’s inadequate implementation of the *Official Languages Act 2003* and the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* (see 4.2.2; 4.2.9). After a series of large organisational meetings, the first of several marches, titled *Lá Mór na Gaeilge*, took place in Dublin in February 2014. With some 6,000 attendees, this was the first language-related march on this scale in almost a decade. Being largely a product of the language movement outside the Gaeltacht, Dearg le Fearg at times struggled to ensure the participation of Gaeltacht residents, as described below. Nonetheless, a subsequent march which took place in the Galway Gaeltacht was the largest protest in any Gaeltacht area in many years, having some 1,000 attendees (Gaelport.com, 2014).

The Dublin march officially aimed to oppose the merger of the office of the Coimisinéir Teanga with that of the Ombudsman, but also served as an opportunity for those long since dissatisfied with state language policy to voice their frustration. The merger of these two offices, first proposed in 2011 as part of wider public service rationalisation measures (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011, Appendix 2: 7; see also 4.2.9), ultimately did not take place, with a Seanad debate on the matter noting that it would not reduce expenditure, instead being likely to increase costs to the state (Seanad Éireann, 2011: 8). In addition to the follow-up march in Galway, in the months

following the Dublin protest a similar demonstration took place in Belfast, where the focus was on the demand for a language act for the North of Ireland.

Despite the obvious connection between this proposed merger and the public service reform that took place in response to the recession, it is notable that the *Dearg le Fearg* campaign did not link its demands to the wider economic context being experienced by the country at the time. In early 2014, eight months before I began this PhD, I attended the large day-long gathering organised by Conradh na Gaeilge at which the *Dearg le Fearg* march was first proposed. Not one of the invited speakers, nor any of the dozens of questions and comments from the floor made any connection between the recession or austerity, then still severe, and the plight of the language. Instead, as with the attitudes towards the use of Irish in the civil service discussed in 4.2.9, language policy reforms were framed as attacks on *Irish-qua-Irish*, the result of those in power allegedly being personally ill-disposed to the language. The Coimisinéir himself, however, did note during his resignation speech that his office was severely under-resourced and under-staffed, their budget having been cut by 45% since 2008 (Oireachtas Éireann, 2013b).

One of my interviewees described the disconnect between the demands of the Irish-language movement and the issues facing Irish society more generally as follows:

*M: [T]á an caidreamh atá ann idir an Ghaeltacht agus an chuid eile d'Éirinn, tá sé aisteach mar na heagraíochtaí a roghnaíonn muid le hamharc i ndiaidh na Gaeltachta, is cuma leo faoin chuid eile den tír. Agus is cuma leis an chuid eile den tír fán Ghaeltacht. So tá cineál symbiotic relationship ansin, tá siad ag déanamh neamhaird ar a chéile!*

As with the case of Guth na Gaeltachta described above, the sectional, de-politicised analysis of the language movement highlights the degree to which Irish is understood as an individual, sectoral pursuit, not something to be fought for as part of a broader struggle to resist the individualisation of public goods. This apolitical approach is likely also connected to Conradh na Gaeilge's dependence on state funding, which ensures it will never be particularly confrontational, for fear of meeting a fate similar to that of groups like *Pléaráca* (see 5.9.2).

Foreshadowing the discussion of the lack of participation in the language planning process (see 5.8), an employee of Conradh na Gaeilge from the Gaeltacht discussed

at length with me the difficulties faced in mobilising people to attend the Dearg le Fearg marches. This difficulty was, she said, particularly pronounced in her home community in west Galway, with many seeing little need to protest for language rights:

*U: [N]íl mé ag iarraidh a bheith i mo negative Nancy faoi chuile shórt ach nuair a bhí muid ag plé leatha, go háirid leis an gcéad cheann, Lá Mór na Gaeilge, mother of God! I think go raibh daoine ag iarraidh orainn goil thart, iad a thóigeáil ón leaba, an bricfeasta a réiteach dhótha, agus iad a chrochadh ar do dhroim ar feadh an mórshiúil. ‘Cause bhí muid ag cur busanna saor in aisce ar fáil. Ba chuma linne cé mhéad busanna a bhí ann. Ar a laghad, y’know, dúirt muid gheobhaidh muid an t-airgead . . . Cuirfidh muid imeachtaí ar siúil [le hairgead a bhailiú], but just faigh na daoine.*

The failure of the language movement to impress upon people the extent of the language shift currently taking place and to promote the potential of effective language planning interventions to benefit Gaeltacht communities as *communities*, regardless of the language issue, was also obvious in her sentiments, which very much accord with my own experiences at the time:

*U: [B]hí muide . . . goil i dteangmháil le an oiread daoine agus just níor thuig siad cén fáth a raibh muid dhá dhéanamh. Níor thuig siad, níor thuig siad go raibh baint ar bith acu lena saol féin. Mar gheall bhí siad ag rá “cén sórt cearta daonna? Tá muid ag labhairt na Gaeilge! Níl siad ag baint uainn an teanga” agus rudaí mar sin. Ní fheiceann siad, mura gcuireann sé isteach orthu ón nóiméad a éiríonn siad ar maidin go dtí an nóiméad a théann siad a chodladh san oíche ní fheiceann siad é . . . Bhí duine de na mná tí ag tabhairt amach yeah faoin gcaoi nach bhfuil airgead dhá chaitheamh sna Gaeltachtaí . . . Agus like mar a deir [a máthair] “bhuel nuair a bhí agai’ a bheith ag an mórshiúil níor sheas sib”. Agus ‘sé an freagra ceart. Ach an freagra a thug sí ar ais ná “sure níor thuig mé cén fáth a raibh sib’ dhá dhéanamh”.*

This disjoint between the minority involved in language activism and the wider community of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht is a fundamental challenge facing revitalisation efforts. As Fennell (1981a) argued, so long as the majority of the population of the Gaeltacht lacks a strong commitment to revitalisation, the best efforts of (typically urbanite) language activists are likely to have little impact on the fate of the Gaeltacht as a distinct linguistic area. With Irish no longer being the unmarked vernacular of the majority of the Gaeltacht (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a), there is certainly merit to this sentiment. While originally referring to the situation of the Gaeltacht in the 1970s, when applied in the present-day Fennell’s argument nonetheless raises the greater question of what is preventing the development of such a commitment. As discussed in 4.2.10.2 and 5.8, the tendency of economic crises to

shift people's concern from post-materialist issues such as language to the realm of material survival is well established in the sociological literature on both civic engagement and attitude formation (Putnam, 2001: 189-203; Voicu et al., 2016). The tendency for crises in neoliberal states to often discourage participation in protest movements rather than radicalise populations into action is also well documented (Grasso and Giugni, 2016).

Although the momentum behind *Dearg le Fearg* eventually petered out over the course of 2014, “An Dream Dearg”, the vibrant campaign group which emerged in 2016 with the goal of securing a language act for the North of Ireland, has, nevertheless, taken many of its cues (at least in terms of branding) from the *Dearg le Fearg* campaign.

Assessing their impact retrospectively, many of my interviewees who attended the 2014 marches had rather lukewarm evaluations of their success:

*M: [N]íl 's agam cé mhéad bus a bhí le goil go Bleá Cliath, agus go Béal Feirste tamallt ina dhiaidh. Caidé a tharla? Fuck all. Fuair muid cúpla péas a bhfuil Gaeilg acu, sin é – cúpla Garda a bhfuil Gaeilg acu. But níor tharla rud ar bith mór.*

While not quite as negative, a *Conradh na Gaeilge* organiser also expressed mixed feelings regarding the marches:

*B: Tá sé deacair a rá, I mean nuair a fheiceann tú an rud atá ag tarlú le Aer Árann [see 5.6.3.1] caithfear ceist a chur. Cheapfainn go raibh éisteacht áiride ann, fiú an cinneadh a bhí ann oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga a fhágáil neamhspleách, bhí sin an-tábhachtach. Fiú ó thaobh cheapachán an choimisinéara nua . . . d'fhéadfadh siad duine i bhfad níos laige a cheapadh, bhí ionadh orm go raibh ceapachán mar sin ann. So like, tá sé deacair a rá cén éisteacht a bhí ann.*

A senior employee in the office of the *Coimisinéir Teanga* told me himself that *Dearg le Fearg* was an important development, which, while perhaps not making specific gains, at least helped raise the profile of his office and show the state the support they have from the Irish-speaking community:

*A: [Ó] thaobh seasamh na hoifige, I think gur chuidigh sé go mór le láidreacht na hoifige seo, go bhfuil tuiscint ann go bhfuil glór ag an oifig seo, go bhfuil lucht labhairt na Gaeilge ag éisteacht leis an méid atá an oifig seo ag rá, agus go bhfuil tuiscint ag an oifig seo ar céard atá ag teastáil . . . [S]ílim go bhfuil tuiscint in áiteachaí eile air sin anois.*

Despite this, since his appointment a great many of the second Coimisinéir's statements have echoed those of his predecessor, with him frequently claiming that his office is being systematically disregarded and undermined (see 4.2.9).

While its results were far from decisive, then, and although such small marches in isolation are easily ignored by the state, *Dearg le Fearg* was still a high point for the language movement during the period discussed in this thesis. Indeed, the intervening years have seen calls by activists for such protests to be repeated, especially in light of *Bliain na Gaeilge*, a “yearlong celebration of Irish” organised in 2018 to coincide with the 125th anniversary of the founding of Conradh na Gaeilge (Tuirisc.ie, 2018i).

### **5.6.3 Reform of island transport links**

Due to the historical progression of English from core to periphery, those islands with Gaeltacht status are generally amongst the strongest remaining Irish-speaking communities. The disruptions to life on several such islands caused by reforms proposed in recent years were therefore most unwelcome developments which were uncondusive to the maintenance of these core Gaeltacht communities.

#### **5.6.3.1 The Oileáin Árann air service**

Amongst these proposals was the suggested discontinuation of the aeroplane service which flies several times daily from Conamara to each of the three Oileáin Árann. Unsurprisingly, this proposal was opposed by a sustained community campaign when it was first made public in summer 2015. Despite this service being in place since 1970, the outcome of the DAHRRGA 2015 call for tender sought to change this long-established arrangement. The department intended to replace the aeroplane service from Conamara with a helicopter route that would depart from the other side of Galway city, thereby making it very difficult – if not impossible – for people to get the boat in the event of inclement weather preventing flying, as happens on occasion.

Protesting this decision, a large public meeting with several hundred attendees took place in September 2015 in Conamara, followed by a march to the nearby DAHRRGA office. This action was followed in the ensuing weeks and months by various pickets, lobbying trips to Dublin, etc. Receiving support from all local opposition politicians, the campaign has to date been successful in maintaining the existing air service, although,

as discussed in 5.9.1, resisting such proposals detracts significantly from the work that community development groups are meant to be engaged in.

Publicly, the Department's decision to not renew the contract of the airline that has been serving the islands for many years was stated to be the outcome of fair competition in the call for tender (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2015). Several of my informants, however, claimed that the proposed helicopter provision was simply a method of cutting all air provision for the islands by stealth. A number of interviewees contended that by offering such an unsuitable and undesired helicopter service, which was likely to be a commercial failure, it would ultimately be easier in coming years for the state to discontinue all air provision for these islands, which are exceptional amongst Irish islands in having a regular air service. One employee in the Irish-language sector who was involved in the community's protests explained this logic to me as follows:

*B: Sin é mo thuairimse hréis a bheith ag caint le lucht an oileáin inné, le roinnt insiders, le Ó Cuív agus na polaiteoirí ar fad. Agus chun an ceart a thabhairt do na polaiteoirí ar fad, chuile pháirtí agus na TDs, tá siad go hiomlán taobh thiar de mhuintir an oileáin. But sin an rud, tuigeann siadsan. B'shin an tuairim láidir atá acu féin, just feiceann siad na comharthaí sóirt . . . Sin mo thuairimse den seirbhís aeir agus gur sábhailt airgid é 'cause is cuimhin liom . . . bhí lá stocaireachta againn thart ar an am céanna i mBuswells [óstán gar don Dáil], agus bhí mé ag plé le Michael Ring [Aire Spóirt agus Turasóireachta na linne] agus bhí seisean ag rá go macánta liom "I said to Dinny [McGinley, an t-iarAire Gaeltachta] just do it, take one big hit and that's it, it'll be forgotten about then". So sin an t-aon feckin dearcadh atá acu, one big hit, it'll be off your plate. Ba chuma faoin fuckin dochar a bhí á dhéanamh, ba chuma faoi na hoileáin. Just breathnaigh: that'll save you money. You'll take one bit hit, it'll be forgotten about and you won't have to be worried about other people then, you'll have enough to cover it. You'll take one big hit, it'll be forgotten about.*

In an interview with an employee of the company which provides the current air service, he talked at length about the difficulties of working with civil servants who were, by his account, simply not interested in finding a solution to this controversy:

*T: An fáth nach bhfuil siad ag iarraidh seirbhís aeir, tá siad den tuairim go bhfuil an bád sách maith go hOileáin Árann. Agus is seirbhís bád atá ann don chuid is mó de na hoileáin ar chósta na hÉireann agus cén fáth a mbeadh seirbhís aeir ann . . . [T]á siad ag ceapadh gur cur amú airgid é. Muintir Árann, tá an iomarca faighte acub cheana agus bíonn siad ag gearán i gcónaí and to hell with them and that's it.*

This is one of very few examples in my data where several interviewees explicitly claimed that there was a covert policy agenda which was linked to budgetary constrictions. When compared to the Toraigh case discussed in the following section, it is very possible that if not for the huge amount of tourism to these islands, which gives their populations a certain amount of sway at the political level, that the service would already have been removed.

The 2015 protests were ultimately successful in getting the government to abandon the proposed helicopter service. While local opposition was clearly important, it must also be noted that during the public commotion over the new helicopter route, DAHRRGA officials became aware that Galway County Council intended to close the airport from which the helicopter was to run just six months after the service began. This fact was not, apparently, factored into the original decision to grant the tender to the company proposing to run its service therefrom (Irish Times, 2015a).

While these protests were an important success story for community mobilisation against state policy, resistance to the re-structuring of the air service in Galway remained a highly localised issue. Similar to the Dearth le Fearg movement described in 5.6.2, at no point that I am aware of in any of the public discourse on the issue – either at public meetings, rallies, or in the media – was the matter explicitly linked to wider issues surrounding reduced state support for the Gaeltacht.

Although aeroplane services continued throughout 2016-17, in mid-2018 Aer Árann, the company running the service, announced it was intending to surrender its contract and discontinue services at the end of the year. They claimed this was due to their dissatisfaction with the excessive fees which are being imposed on them by the department responsible for the Gaeltacht (RTÉ, 2018d). Although a last-minute compromise was eventually reached which will see services continue for another year (Tuairisc.ie, 2018j), in early 2019 the minister responsible for the Gaeltacht announced that the state was still considering replacing the aeroplane service with a helicopter one (Dáil Éireann, 2019).

The potential loss of the aeroplane service takes on even greater significance when one considers that in early December 2016 the ferry service to one of these islands was almost discontinued until March, due to the County Council having demanded a



significant increase in the fee they charged the ferry company to land on the island (Tuairisc.ie, 2016j). While the County Council was adamant that the fee previously being charged was too low, it is easy to see this proposed change as an attempt by the council to increase their own revenue in the face of the severe cutbacks they too faced. As a co-op manager said to me when talking about the Council:

*H: [F]eicimse an Chomhairle Contae, Jesus, bheifeá ag tarraingt amach do ghruaig ag plé leotha sin! “Níl muid ábalta seo a dhéanamh, níl airgead ar bith againn, níl airgead ar bith againn, níl airgead ar bith againn...”*

Although it is hard to imagine that it could come to pass that islanders would ever be left stranded for even a short time for want of either sea or air services, such events nonetheless illustrate some of the difficulties faced by island communities in recent years.

#### **5.6.3.2 The Toraigh ferry service**

While space does not permit a detailed discussion of the matter, the reform of the ferry service to Oileán Thoraí in Donegal in 2018 provides another important example of community wishes being ignored. Despite the community frequently complaining before 2018 that their ferry was too old and unfit for purpose, tender was granted to a company proposing to use an even older and less suitable boat, with the authorities apparently feeling that it was more important to demonstrate a commitment to free market competition processes than the maintenance of island communities.

Despite well-supported protests in Dublin and Galway (where a main office of the department responsible for the Gaeltacht is located), as well as several families stating the new service would prompt them to leave the island, the community were ultimately forced to accept a service which many of them were unhappy with, a severe blow for an island that lost 17.4% of its population between 2011-16 (see 5.2.1).

FOI requests by news site Tuairisc.ie showed that although the National Development Plan launched at the time of this controversy included a commitment to build a new ferry for the island sometime before 2027 (Government of Ireland, 2018b: 51), this commitment was added just days before the plan's publication, seemingly in response to protests which were ongoing at the time. Furthermore, the Department of Public Expenditure agreed to the inclusion of this point “on the strict understanding that the costs are met from within your Department's stated allocation”, with no additional

funding to be made available for the building of such a vessel (Tuairisc.ie, 2018k). As with the funding for language plans being taken from Gaeltacht road maintenance budgets (see 4.2.3; 5.8), this case thus offers yet another illustration of the problematic attitude state institutions hold towards the provision of fundamental community infrastructure in the Gaeltacht.

## **5.7 “Corporate Social Responsibility” and the Gaeltacht – fighting neoliberalism with neoliberalism?**

In addition to the oppositional movements detailed in 5.6, during my fieldwork I noted several instances of communities attempting to overcome the difficulties caused by decreased state subventions via recourse to unorthodox means, including turning to non-state actors and corporate sources of funding in order to finance important local infrastructure.

During my stay in one Donegal community in summer 2016 I was enthusiastically told by several locals that a new pre-school was to be opened come September. Shortly after I left the area, an online crowdfunding campaign was started by the local co-op to fund this initiative. Being in some ways a 21<sup>st</sup> century variation of the long-established tradition of getting financial and material aid from those who have emigrated, this effort could be seen as having significant cultural precedent. Traditionally, clothing packages were sent home by departed relatives, as were so-called “American letters” – which often included money to pay the emigration passage of younger relatives (Brody, 1974: 84; Corrigan, 1992: 151).

As opposed to aiding immediate family members, however, this crowdfunding campaign was attempting to finance important infrastructure for the whole community, a service which one would expect to have been eligible for state funding. Nonetheless, this approach clearly indicates that those who started the campaign have an awareness that it is, to a degree, up to themselves to seek out unorthodox funding methods in order to fund such initiatives in light of the greatly reduced budget for the Gaeltacht. It is also, I believe, indicative of the extent to which the neoliberal understanding of state functions has been internalised by these populations. Despite initially garnering attention on both social and traditional media, over six months after the campaign was launched only a little over a sixth of the target had been reached, €645 of a €3,000 goal.

Similarly, several schools have recently had to resort to asking parents to pay for the recruitment of an additional teacher to ensure that a new Gaeltacht education policy can be effectively implemented, a process which has been made particularly challenging due to the cuts to staff numbers in small rural schools since 2008 (Tuairisc.ie, 2017o).

An even more striking example of the neoliberalisation of the financing of public infrastructure occurred in summer 2015 in Inis Meáin in Co. Galway. A change in the Department of Education's policy regarding student-staff ratios – itself allowing for expenditure on rural schools to be cut (Irish Times, 2011b) – left Inis Meáin's school, with under twenty pupils, no longer eligible for a second teacher. This decision led to a community campaign to have this second teacher re-instated, involving public meetings and lobbying sessions in Dublin (Irish Times, 2015b). The issue was ultimately resolved when Zurich Insurance Group, which as of 2017 was the 127<sup>th</sup> largest company in the world (Forbes, 2017), committed to funding the second teacher's position for two years. As part of their "investing in communities" programme, Zurich claimed they were anxious to fund the school due to the fact that "Inis Meáin is a stronghold of the Irish language. The language, and the very sustainability of the island, is under threat if families there cannot avail of a good level of education for their children" (Irish Times, 2015n). In light of their involvement in the hedge fund scandals (Reuters, 2007) that ultimately helped precipitate the global crash which led the Irish state to cut funding for small rural schools, it is not without irony that Zurich have seized on the Inis Meáin case as a way to bolster their image. Indeed, one newspaper at the time described them as a "white knight" riding in to save the Gaeltacht (Connacht Tribune, 2015). Fortunately, however, an increase in pupil numbers after this two-year period of funding was concluded saw the Department of Education concede to funding the second teacher's position once more.

Similarly, in a language school in Galway I heard management discuss applying for grants from corporations such as Google under their corporate social responsibility schemes. While there was also discussion of applying for support from ÚnaG, it was observed that the cuts meant they had very little left to give to small businesses.

The fact that corporate and other unorthodox funding was being discussed so widely illustrates not only the extent of the cutbacks but also the success with which

neoliberalism has framed the concerns of such peripheral communities as an issue for charitable schemes by corporations seeking good publicity, rather than the responsibility of the state which governs these areas. While there is undoubtedly potential for short-term gain for Gaeltacht communities by adopting such strategies, as Watson has observed, it is the policy legacy of the earlier protectionist and liberal eras (c. 1922-1980) that continues to support Irish. The neoliberal era that has emerged since the 1980s, on the other hand, has seen this support steadily dismantled (Watson, 2016: 71). As such, by engaging with the neoliberal project on its own terms and conceding, perhaps, that it is not necessarily the responsibility of the state to provide important community infrastructure, minority language communities potentially sow the seeds of their own destruction. Through such actions, the neoliberal vision of society gradually becomes normalised on a micro-level, with states largely absolved of their previously existing responsibilities to the periphery.

## **5.8 The Language Planning Process required by the *Gaeltacht Act 2012***

As described in 4.2.3, a key provision of the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* sees the responsibility for language planning in the Gaeltacht historically associated with the state transferred in large part to voluntary community groups. As was explained, the content of this act was heavily conditioned by the economic situation of the country at the time of its introduction, and its provisions have been understood as a way for the state to withdraw from much of its long-standing commitment to language revitalisation (Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 107-15). The implementation of this process began in 2014 in some of the strongest Gaeltacht areas (Corca Dhuibhne in Kerry, Cois Fharraige in Galway and Gaoth Dobhair/Íochtar na Rosann in Donegal), with other LPAs undertaking the writing of plans in more recent years. During my fieldwork these efforts were ongoing in many of the communities I studied, giving me the opportunity to observe how this macro-level policy of state withdrawal has played out at the local level. Several of my interviewees were involved in this process, including members of voluntary committees and a number of language planning consultants working full-time on its implementation.

During my first visit to the ÚnaG regional office in Donegal a staff member, upon hearing that I was studying language planning, immediately proceeded to tell me that

the most significant challenge for this process was enticing people to join the voluntary committees to whom much of the work has been delegated. This challenge is unsurprising in light of falling rates of voluntarism in the developed west (Putnam, 2001), the fact that for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland had an uncommonly weak culture of civic engagement (Mac Cormaic, 2011: 21), and that the neoliberal period that began in Ireland in the late 1980s has seen voluntary participation atrophy further (Khoo, 2006; Neville, 2015). While there are no comparable studies of Ireland, Laurence and Lim (2015) have also demonstrated that the economic crisis reduced volunteering levels in the United States and the United Kingdom (see also 4.2.10.2; Clarke and Heath, 2014). As such, this greatest difficulty noted by the ÚnaG executive was very likely exacerbated by the material uncertainty brought about by the recession. As one of my interviewees stated *“[r]joimh an phleanáil teanga caithfidh díon a bheith os do chionn agus caithfidh jab a bheith agat!”*

Government policy explicitly predicated on community voluntarism in a time of economic turmoil thus requires substantial efforts towards encouraging participation, even more so than during less testing periods. Financial constraints, however, have prevented a co-ordinated publicity campaign being implemented for the language planning process. This need to promote community involvement and ownership (cornerstones of any language revitalisation project) was raised by an attendee at a training day for language planning committees that I attended in 2015. The chairperson of ÚnaG responded that it was a *“ceist airgid”*, with them simply not being able to afford a publicity campaign, it consequently being the duty of local committees to promote awareness of the process’s importance for ensuring Irish continues to be spoken in the Gaeltacht.

A language planner I interviewed further highlighted the need for Gaeltacht-wide awareness raising efforts, noting that public cynicism resulting from the failure of previous revitalisation attempts and the widespread ignorance of what language planning involves each comprise major challenges for the process:

*N: [T]á an phleanáil teanga ag tosú amach in áit go bhfuil soiniciúlacht ag an bpobal faoi, mar rinneadh iarrachtaí cheana. Chomh maith leis sin ní thuigeann siad céard atá i gceist. Ní raibh cead pleanála maidir le tithe tá mé ag ceapadh go dtí na 60idí, bhí daoine ag ceapadh “céard sa diabhal é seo, tá cead agam mo rogha rud a thógáil i mo ghairdín féin”. Anois tuigeann daoine an gá le*

*pleanáil fhisiciúil. Tógfaidh sé am ar dhaoine agus tá mé ag ceapadh go bhfuil gá le feachtas mór...Ní mistéir é, ach is coincheap nua don ghnáthphobal [é].*

Echoing this sentiment, a diligent Irish speaker who teaches the language in a university context noted the disdain with which her community currently holds the process:

*G: Bhí mé sa mbaile ag caint le mo thuismitheoirí agus bhí siad ag rá y'know "céard é seo, níl mise ag iarraidh goil síos ag an halla ag caint ar an nGaeilge". Níl 's a'm an dtuigeann [an pobal] cén sprioc atá leis, cén aidhm atá leis. Bíonn chuile shórt a bhaineann leis cineál acadúil agus níl aon duine...Tá sé an-deacair do chuid tuairimí a chur in iúl agus tú ag plé [le ceistneoirí]. Tá tú ag cur tic i mbosca. Tá an ghráin ag daoine orthub, tá an ghráin a'm féin orthub. Agus muna bhfuil tú ag obair le Gaeilge, níl 's a'm an dtuigeann daoine an tsáinn ina bhfuil muid.*

Throughout my fieldwork I regularly heard disparaging comments about language planning, in private as well as public contexts, including during interviews:

*R: Caithfidh mé a admháil, agus b'fhéidir nár chóir domsa é seo a rá ach níl mórán measa agamsa ar an bpleanáil teanga. Now sin ráite níl tada mórán léite agam faoi so I suppose go bhfuil mé aineolach sa gcaoi sin.*

As soon as I mentioned the term “*pleanáil teanga*” to a man I had just met in Galway he similarly made his opinion clear:

*B: Bhfuil 's agat an rud seo ar a mbíonn siad ag caint, an phleanáil teanga –*

*S: Seafóid! B'fhéidir nár chóir dom sin a rá...*

Furthermore, as one individual, who himself does an enormous amount to promote a vibrant social life through Irish in the Gaeltacht, stated:

*P: Bhfuil 's agat, a Bhen, níl eolas ar bith agam [ar an bpróiseas seo]. Cuireann na rudaí sin cineál depression orm so just fanaím ar shiúil uaidh. B'fhearr liom mo rud féin a dhéanamh . . . Caidé, caithfidh an pobal plean a chur le chéile? Is dóiche gur rud maith é sin. Ach níl an pobal á dhéanamh, níl suim ar bith ag 99% den phobal.*

The imposition of what is allegedly meant to be an empowering and participatory process in this fashion, with little attempt to explain why exactly it is important or what value it adds to communities has, then, been deeply ineffective in promoting public enthusiasm. Widespread disinterest in or cynicism towards state policies is, of course, not unique to language planning. The heavily voluntarist aspect of the *Gaeltacht Act*

2012 is, however, somewhat peculiar from a public policy perspective. The fact that it is based on community participation but nonetheless saw all but no extra resources devoted to promoting such engagement is clearly indicative of the extent of state “rollback” from language promotion efforts in recent years.

A comparison with the resources afforded to publicising LPP measures during the Celtic Tiger highlights once again the degree to which the cuts have affected the functionality of Irish-language institutions. Writing before the 2008 crisis about the *Official Languages Act 2003*, Walsh and McLeod explained that “[t]he Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs ran language awareness campaigns in 2004 and 2005 but the total budget for these was a mere €500,000” (2008: 42). In comparison with the non-existence of *any* such campaign during a much more substantial policy reform, occurring at a critical point for the language’s future, this “mere €500,000” seems very substantial indeed. It is, in fact, more than the total made available for the implementation of the language planning process in any single year between 2012-16, and five times the annual budget that LPAs will receive for implementing their plans once they have been completed. Further details regarding funding for this process are given in 4.2.3.

Despite the lack of publicity around the issue, as of the time of writing the majority of LPAs have a voluntary committee of some description working on their area’s language plan, although I was often told that these were small and had a handful of people doing much more than the lion’s share of the work. It is also notable that the age group perhaps most important for the success of this process, young adults, tend to be absent from such committees. This is likely a result of various other structural issues discussed in this chapter, many of which disproportionately affect younger people – including outmigration, precarious employment conditions, income inequality and the general decline in civic engagement these factors produce (Putnam, 2001; Steger 2002; Paskov and Dewilde, 2012). One long-term ÚnaG employee, however, explained this tendency as follows:

*É: Agus an téarma seo . . . “pleanáil teanga” – smaointigh tusa, Ben, gur tusa leaid óg thíos an baile ag ól piontaí agus tá girseach deas agat agus dá ndéarfadh duine leat “ar mhaith leat dul chuig cruinniú faoin phleanáil teanga? Ar mhaith leat dul chuig cruinniú fá choinne pleanáil tithíochta?” Déarfá “fuckin hell níor mhaith!”*

He then proceeded to tell me that those involved in this process are the same people who were already active in other forms of community development, but that they have now had a further significant duty imposed upon them:

*É: An deacracht is mó atá sna Gaeltachtaí, creid nó ná creid é . . . ná go bhfuil na daoine atá ag déanamh an obair uilig sna pobail, obair forbartha, go bhfuil an rud seo caite ina mullach agus go mothaíonn siad é iontach trom agus go bhfuil siad iontach beag . . . Tá siad ag mothú an brú seo uilig faoin phleanáil teanga, an rud casta seo agus tá orthu ag an am céanna le rudaí forbartha pobail a dhéanamh, le féilte a reáchtáil...*

As another interviewee put it “[s]é an dream céanna a thaganns ag chuile shórt agus ní shin ionadaíocht ar son an phobail”. A language planning consultant involved in the process noted similar challenges:

*D: [T]á sé thar a bheith deacair orthu mar tá ualach na hoibre sin curtha ar a ghualainn, like ag deireadh an lae muna n-éiríonn linn an plean seo a chur le chéile . . . cailleann siad a stádas Gaeltachta, agus is ana-ualach é sin le bheith ar aon choiste . . . [T]á cúraimí eile ag na daoine seo agus níl, bhuel, mar a deir mé, níl 's ag éinne céard atá ar siúl, ach níl saineolas acu, ach tá siadsan ag streachailt agus ag déanamh a dhícheall, agus tá sé iontach doiligh orthu.*

In order to compensate for their own lack of expertise, many committees have used the funding made available for preparing their plans to procure the assistance of an outside consultant to assist with this work. It has, however, been difficult or impossible for many communities to find a suitably qualified person for this position. Not only is there a relatively small number of people with the requisite qualifications, but the short-term, low pay nature of the contracts offered do little to make it an appealing proposition to those qualified for this work. As I was told by an interviewee who has moved county four times in two years pursuing temporary contracts writing several of these plans:

*A: [É]inne leis na cáilíochtaí céanna is a bhí agamsa . . . má bhí post fiú ann leath-réasúnta faighte ag na daoine sin ní raibh siad á thabhairt suas le goil ag obair ar phlean teanga. Tá tú ag caint ar chonradh gearr-thréimhseach, gan aon chinnteacht. Níl tú ag caint ar airgead an-mhaith . . . Agus tá sé an-uaigneach mar obair, sin an rud ba mhó a chur isteach ormsa . . . Is obair chrua atá ann . . . D'fhág sé rian ar mo shláinte fiú ann, an strus a bhaineann leis . . . I mo chonradh-sa . . . bhí sé curtha in iúl nach obair lán-aimseartha a bhí ann [ach] bhí sé lán-aimseartha agus tuilleadh. Bhí mé ag obair cúig lá sa tseachtain [agus] ag tarraingt ar an deireadh, seacht lá sa tseachtain. Bheinn ag éirí ag a seacht, goil ag obair, críochnú ag meán oíche . . . Mar gheall nach raibh an t-airgead chomh hiontach sin . . . bhí mé ag aistriú, bhí mé ag múineadh, ag*



*déanamh jabanna beaga eile [freisin] . . . Níl sé inbhuanaithe ní dóigh liom do dhuine.*

The emergence of such undesirable, “atypical” working conditions (which are, of course, becoming ever more typical) and the so-called “precariat” class under neoliberalism is well documented in socioeconomic literature, as are the extremely detrimental consequences of such conditions on workers’ physical and mental health (Standing, 2014; Sparke, 2016). The outsourcing of positions formerly occupied by relatively well-paid public servants is also a key feature of the neoliberal New Public Management measures discussed in 4.2.9:

outsourcing support[s] a casualization and peripherization of labor that treat[s] certain jobs within the organization as temporary or “as needed”, and allows for readier workforce control and reduced costs to the state (Ward, 2011: 208-9).

While the level of education required to work in this sector means such consultants would not be classed as members of the precariat, it does place them in the category of “emergent service workers” – an emergent class better off than the precariat primarily by virtue of their higher levels of social and cultural capital (Savage, 2015: 169-75).

Indeed, during the writing of this chapter, while in my fourth year of this study, I myself have been employed part-time as a consultant for an LPA in Donegal. Although this work was obviously not part of my PhD research and included its own stipulations regarding anonymity and the ownership of the research conducted for the purpose of writing the plan, it has nonetheless provided me with much first-hand experience of this process which accords with the findings of the ethnographic work conducted specifically for this thesis.

Another consultant I interviewed felt that while they had sufficient resources to prepare their plan, the uncertainty surrounding funding for the plans’ implementation provided significant cause for concern:

*B: An bhfuil an maoiniú sásúil leis an obair a dhéanamh?*

*N: Déarfainn féin go bhfuil, ach an faitíos amháin atá ann ná nach mbeidh maoiniú ann leis an bplean a chur i bhfeidhm. Ansin beidh soiniciúlacht ag baint leis sin aríst agus beidh muid níos faide siar ná a bhí muid ariamh má tharlaíonn sé sin. Iarracht eile cineál nár éirigh leis. Is dainseár an-mhór, sin é an dainséar ba mhó atá bainteach leis an bpróiseas uilig.*

Indeed, while the first several plans were being prepared, the state refused to give any indication of what, if any, resources would be made available for their implementation – making it very difficult to make recommendations in the plans, as I often heard. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to challenge the minister then responsible for the Gaeltacht, Seán Kyne, on this issue at a public meeting in Conamara. When asked if he was willing to confirm that adequate funding would indeed be made available for the plans' implementation he stated simply *“níl mé sásta aon rud a gheallúint, Ben”*.

Although arguably a politically sensible position to adopt, such a response certainly does not suggest that the state is fully supportive of these communities' efforts and does little to encourage people to devote their free time to the process. A member of a language planning committee in Galway noted that such uncertainty and frustration was likely to be a further obstacle to promoting community engagement:

*B: Tá sé ag cothú soiniciúlacht aisteach. Agus cheapfainn gurb shin an dochar is mó atá á dhéanamh, mar tá tú ag cur lagmhisneach...Agus tá 's agam tá sé deacair daoine a fháil amach, bhí ariamh, ach tá sé níos measa anois . . . tá tú in ann suí sa mbaile agus pé rud, tá caoga satellite, pé rud is mian leat. So tá sé deacair daoine a fháil atá sásta gníomhú. Tá na daoine sin fíorluachmhar agus caithfidh tú iad a chothú. An rud atá ar siúl . . . [tá] tú ag cur lagmhisneach ar dhaoine, ag baint míúsáid as na daoine sin. Agus caithfidh mé a rá, an faitíos atá orm ó thaobh na pobal seo, go mbeidh daoine just ag rá y'know “fuck it! Just tá mo dhóthain agam, ní fiú é”.*

In line with this sentiment, on more than one occasion I saw people withdraw from language planning committees because of their understandable dissatisfaction with the process.

As another professional language planner observed in relation to the uncertainty regarding funding for the plans' implementation:

*D: [T]á 's agam nach féidir le rialtas ar bith a bheith 100% cinnte ach, bhfuil 's agat, is féidir leo a bheith cinnte faoi rudaí eile a bhaineann le buiséidí. Y'know má tá siad ag labhairt leis an IDA is féidir leo a rá, bhuel, beidh an ráta cáin corparáideach seo i bhfeidhm go ceann cé mhéad bliain, beidh an ráta úis seo i bhfeidhm go dtí cibé...Feictear dom go bhfuil sé, ní greannmhar an focal ceart, ach spéisiúil gur féidir leo a bheith cinnte ó thaobh go leor rudaí eile . . . An tacaíocht atá ag teastáil . . . ná an chinnteacht, leagtha amach go soiléir céard a tharlóidh. An mbeidh pota airgead ann? An mbeidh airgead cineál ringfenced don tionscnamh seo?*

With the publication of the 2018 budget, it finally became clear that some funding – €100,000 per plan per annum – would be made available for the implementation phase of the process. As noted in 4.2.3, the minister then responsible for the Gaeltacht stated repeatedly in the Dáil, however, that making this money available would require the discontinuation of the scheme that had previously financed the maintenance of many of the roads in the Gaeltacht (Tuairisc.ie, 2016k; Dáil Éireann, 2017). Such decisions represent an extremely flawed view of language revitalisation, an unhelpful dichotomy that implies there is no connection between language vitality and the provision of basic community infrastructure such as adequately surfaced roads.

Furthermore, this funding is significantly less than required for those LPAs that have many thousands of residents, being under half of that required based on the costings provided in the plan prepared in the Cois Fharraige area, for instance, which has a population of circa 6,500. During the writing of this chapter, the first three plans to be completed were officially launched. While it did not ultimately occur, one of my interviewees told me that their committee seriously contemplated boycotting the official launch in protest at this funding, which was also insufficient for their plan's requirements. The issue was discussed at length in the media, with Professor Dónall Ó Baoill – who co-wrote a plan in Donegal (Ní Dhoimhín and Ó Baoill, 2016) – stating that such inadequate budgets ensure that the plans will fail (Tuairisc.ie, 2017p).

As one of the planners I spoke to said:

*A: [M]á bhí aon mhuinín ann riamh, tá an muinín sin caillte sa bpróiseas . . . [Tá] pleananna ag dul faoi bhráid an aire Gaeltachta agus tá sé ag ceadú na bpleananna sin, tá sé á síneadh, ach níl sé ag ceadú na n-acmhainní atá ag teastáil leis na pleananna sin a chur i bhfeidhm . . . Ní dhéanann sé aon chiall dhomsa plean a cheadú nuair nach mbeidh acmhainní ann dhó. B'fhearr i bhfad dul ar ais agus ath-dhréachtú a dhéanamh [agus] an plean a mhúnlú sa gcaoi go mbeidh siad inchurtha i bhfeidhm ar an airgead sin . . . Na hoifigigh seo a bheas ag cur i bhfeidhm na bpleananna . . . níl bealach ar bith go n-éireoidh leo an méid atá sa bplean a bhaint amach . . . Feictear dom go bhfuil fadhb loighiciúil ansin.*

This process has thus seen voluntary groups work for several years in the hope that their efforts would be rewarded with adequate state support for their plans' implementation, only for such support to not materialise after they had fulfilled their duties.

In response to the announcement of such inadequate funding, two of the first three committees to launch their plans (Cois Fharraige and Gaoth Dobhair/Íochtar na Rosann) announced in late 2017 that they were refusing to accept the €100,000 offered, demanding instead the amount requested, €250,000 and €150,000 respectively. The Cois Fharraige committee went as far as to announce its intention to disband if their requests went unanswered. Despite this being a cause of much discussion in the Irish-language media, the department responsible for the Gaeltacht maintained that there would be no increase, but that groups involved in the process could apply for other support schemes offered by the department (Tuairisc.ie, 2017q). This was seen by one planner as being a very problematic solution, however:

*A: [Ba] chóir an idirbheartaíocht sin a láimhseáil ag leibhéal an rialtais mar má tá ar an gcoiste nó ar an oifigeach teanga . . . cur isteach ar dheontais, ar scéimeanna agus seo, siúd agus eile – níl 's agam an bhfaca tú aon cheann de na foirmeachaí sin a riamh ach tá siad fada, tá siad trom . . . Má bhíonn orthu sin a dhéanamh le fanacht ar snámh, mar a déarfá, ní bheidh an t-am acu a gcuid oibre a dhéanamh i gceart, ní bheidh an t-am acu a bheith amuigh sna pobail.*

A third committee in Corca Dhuibhne also announced their intention to boycott this inadequate funding upon completing their plan (Tuairisc.ie, 2017r). Such developments marked a considerable escalation of tensions between these communities and the state, and while it remains to be seen how events will proceed, in December 2017 €50,000 extra was offered to the committees involved in the boycott (Tuairisc.ie, 2017s). The Cois Fharraige committee maintained this is nonetheless €100,000 less than is needed, and was still considering dissolving itself at the time of writing.

Despite the country officially having recovered from the crisis, funding for these plans is still enormously difficult to secure, requiring boycotts to gain resources to implement state policy. As Taft (2018) explains, public spending is unlikely to return to pre-crisis levels until 2023, 15 years after the crisis began, although as of 2018 it is 90% of what it was in 2008. Nonetheless, as 4.2.4 described, capital investment for the Gaeltacht and islands in 2017 was less than one seventh of what it was before the crash (Byrne, 2018), a stark illustration of the extent to which the sector has been reformed since the crisis began.

In addition to the various difficulties regarding community participation and funding, the state has refused to commit to ensuring its own activities in the Gaeltacht are conducted through Irish, with experts consequently feeling the planning process is unlikely to succeed (Tuairisc.ie, 2017t). As an employee in the Coimisinéir Teanga's office told me:

*G: Beidh rath ar an bpleanáil teanga má bhíonn nasc ag an stát ann. Mura bhfuil nasc ag an stát ann ní féidir leis na pobail é a dhéanamh astu féin. So ní féidir a rá go dtí go bhfeiceann muid iad “in action” as they say. But like mura bhfuil an stát chun seasamh leob, agus by that I mean muna bhfuil an stát chun geallúint a thabhairt faoi seirbhísí stáit sa nGaeltacht, mar shampla, go mbeidh siad ar fáil trí Ghaeilge, tá sé really lopsided i dtreo an phobail agus níl sé sin ceart. So ní fheicim, muna bhfuil an stát chun dá lámh a chur leis an roth ar bhealach agus é a bhrú iad féin, tá sé deacair a fheiceáil cén chaoi ar féidir leis an bpobal é a dhéanamh iad féin.*

Despite the obvious need for such support, in November 2017, the Department of Agriculture advertised a managerial position based in Ros a' Mhíl in Galway which did not include Irish-language competency as a requirement for employment (Tuairisc.ie, 2017u), even though this area contains the only electoral division in the country where Irish remains the dominant language of communication for those aged under-18 (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a: 9; see also 4.2.9).

In light of the manner in which the state has implemented the 2012 Act, it is not surprising that even those heavily involved in the language planning process frequently described it as a ploy to open the way for further state withdrawal from language revitalization efforts. Indeed, one long-term employee of the department responsible for Gaeltacht policy explicitly suggested to me that the 2012 Act was a trick (“cleas”) to

*P: [F]áil réiti' leis an chúram. Agus ansin má thiteann an tóin amach as an rud uilig . . . beidh siadsan ábalta a rá, bhuel, níl an locht orainne, thug muidinne an cúram sin do na pobail agus má lig siadsan dó . . . is ar na pobail atá an locht.*

While, as Chapter 4 described, neoliberal policy conventions are clearly visible in much Irish-language policy produced in recent years, the language planning process laid out in the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* is perhaps one of the clearest examples that this sector provides of the neoliberal “rollback” of the state famously described by Peck and Tickell (2002). While allegedly meant to be empowering, it has instead bred

cynicism and disdain and done far less than required to foster the community support and participation necessary for language revitalisation, factors all the more crucial at a time when all available evidence shows the Gaeltacht to be facing sociolinguistic crisis.

## **5.9 Cuts to other community projects**

Further to those already discussed, many other Gaeltacht support structures not addressed above also experienced heavy cuts in recent years. While the full extent of state withdrawal of such provisions is too great to cover systematically in a thesis of this length, two further examples that are worthy of attention and illustrative of wider patterns will be discussed in this section, those of local co-operatives and the community group *Pléaráca*.

### **5.9.1 Community co-operatives**

Having first emerged in the 1960s and 70s as a grassroots reaction to the failure of state-sponsored efforts at Gaeltacht development (Breathnach, 1986: 80), community co-operatives (hereafter “co-ops”) have since become central to the socioeconomic life of many Gaeltacht communities. Serving primarily as local development agencies, co-ops typically oversee community services such as waste collection, day-care centres for the elderly, pre-school groups, employment schemes, etc. In most cases it is to the local co-op that responsibility for the language planning process required by the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* has been delegated, with them overseeing the voluntary committees (see 4.2.3; 5.8). While initially financed by subscriptions from local households, the co-ops are now funded by the state through ÚnaG. Co-ops are widely understood to be very important for community life in the Gaeltacht, as described by this interviewee, who herself worked in a co-op for many years:

*R: [P]léann siad le cúrsaí naíonra, cúrsaí turasóireachta, cúrsaí teanga, chuile rud. Anois caithfidh siad an plean teanga a chur i bhfeidhm so tá siad uafásach, uafásach lárnach i bhforbairt pobail agus forbairt eacnamaíochta.*

Referring to the problematic nature of employment based on Foreign Direct Investment, which typically leaves the Gaeltacht once an end comes to ÚnaG-supplied grants (see 5.3.4), another interviewee commented on the value for money co-ops present to the state, with them being certain not to re-locate overseas in search of cheaper labour:

*M: [D]á n-éireodh le trian de na comharchumainn, gheobhadh siad luach a gcaiteachais. 'Cause níl comharchumainn ag bogadh áit ar bith. Níl siad goil a rá right cibé téarmaí a fuair muid cúig bliana ó shin, tá deireadh leis sin, cibé cuidiú a thug sibh don chomhlacht seo . . . that's us, we're off. Mar tá siad lonnaithe anseo, tá siad ina gcónaí anseo, cuid den phobal iad!*

Although ostensibly based on local democratic empowerment, I repeatedly heard that only a small number of people play an active role in these co-ops:

*R: Tá comharchumann ann agus tá sé go maith agus b'fhéidir ceann de na cinn is fearr sa tír . . . Ag an am céanna má théann tú ag an gcruinniú cinn bhliana ní bheidh ann ach b'fhéidir deichniúr, cúig-, cúig dhuine dhéag, mar sin níl sé . . . mar ba mhaith leat é a bheith, 'sé sin chuile dhuine páirteach agus ag coinneáil súil ar a bhfuil ag tarlú agus feictear dom gur, bhfuil 's a'd, gur beagnach, d'fhéadfá a rá gur eagraíocht de chuid an státa atá ann agus atá coinnithe ag imeacht ag airgead an státa agus, agus gur ó, gurb shin é an dearcadh atá ag daoine.*

As well as echoing common discourses around the problematic nature of the professionalization of what were previously voluntary sectors, this lack of significant community “co-operation” with so many co-ops is reflective of the wider breakdown of civic engagement in developed western cultures over recent decades (see 5.8). Similar to the language planning committees, it appears that this tendency has also affected Gaeltacht co-ops. With the state now funding full-time employees, other community members seemingly feel they no longer have a personal duty towards these institutions, and that all related work should be done by those supposedly paid to do it – a particularly problematic situation in light of the cutbacks to staff funding described below.

In interviews with the managers of co-ops in Galway and Donegal, they commented at length about the severity of the cutbacks to their budgets. These budgets are provided by ÚnaG, which lost almost three quarters of its funding between 2008-15 (see 4.2.4), a reduction which was in part passed on to the co-ops in the form of a 40% cut to their budget. A manager in Galway discussed this with me:

*C: B'fhéidir le cúpla bliain a tharla sé, y'know ní scaipthe ar fad sna blianta, tharla sé saghas tapa, cuirfidh mé mar sin é. So an chéad rud a chaill muid ná an bainisteoir cabhartha . . . Chaill muid an duine sin ar dtús agus an chéad rud eile ghearr siad freisin an deontas reáchtála féin, an dtuigeann tú? So ghearr siad chuile áit é níl aon dabht, ní muide amháin . . . Ghearr siad é agus ní raibh aon bhealach ag Údarás ach buiséid a ghearradh. Bhí siad ag gearradh chuile dhuine mar nuair nach bhfuil airgead ann ní féidir é a thabhairt amach.*

A manager in Donegal also reported heavy reductions: “*gheobhann muid deontas reáchtála ó Údarás na Gaeltachta, so sin 85,000 sa bhliain. Now ba ghnáth linn bheith suas ag 125,000. Sin sna laethibh maithe!*”

While such cuts are undoubtedly significant, in both Galway and Donegal I was told that rather than discontinuing essential services, this reduction in funding was absorbed on a personal basis by staff members – foregoing holidays, working an unpaid day every week, etc.:

*C: [C]huir sé an-bhrú orm féin, like I mean ní bhínn ag tógáil saoire nó tada, níor thóg mé saoire le blianta . . . Sin an cineál duine mé féin is cuma liom sa diabhal ach . . . ag an am céanna níl sin do chuile dhuine, sin drochstaid, an duine a thiocfas i mo dhiaidh ní bheidheadar ag iarraidh an saol sin agus beidh an ceart acu . . . Thug mise gearradh pá dom féin. Fiú ann bliain amháin, cuirfidh mé mar sin é, bhí mé sásta pá le ceithre lá agus ansin lá saor a dhéanamh don chomharchumann . . . Dúirt mé caithfidh muid rud eicínt a dhéanamh . . . mar tá an comharchumann fíorthábhachtach don [phobal].*

Again, the manager in Donegal experienced similar difficulties:

*B: So tigeann sé sin as mo phostsa fosta. Ó wow, but ní fhéadfá a bheith thíos le achan rud . . . Buíochas le Dia níor ghearr siad é le dhá bhliain, tá sé ag fanacht ag 85,000. So tá súileas nach rachaidh sé síos mar bhí sé doiligh, bhí cinnte. Caithfidh tú amhanc ansin i ndiaidh rudaí fá choinne gearradh agus níl mé ag iarraidh sin . . . But ó thosaigh muid níor tharraing muid aon rud, agus tá mé bródúil as sin. Anois b'fhéidir gur chóir go mbeadh cúpla rud stopaithe 'cause tá siad ag cailleadh airgid but seirbhísí tábhachtacha atá ann don [cheantar]. So I mean dá dtiontódh siad thart amárach is a ráit abraíonn an cuntasóir níl cead agat a dhath ar bith a chaitheamh muna bhfuil tú ag fáil an airgid ar ais déarfainn alright an bhfuil muid goil druid síos an ionad lae [do sheandaoine]?*

While undoubtedly very altruistic responses to the crisis, this personal absorption of the cutbacks is perhaps partly a pragmatic response to life in small communities. Rather than turning the community against them due to the collapse of vital services that are under their direction, these managers may have simply found it easier to accept such personal tribulations as the price of satisfying their communities.

Beyond the negative effects for local socioeconomic development, cuts to staffing in co-ops has a very direct link to weakening the standing of Irish in these communities. Unlike the majority of state-supported employment in the Gaeltacht (see 5.3.4), co-ops in stronger Gaeltacht areas provide a professional environment in which Irish is



the default language, and as such they play an important part in ensuring the dominance of the language in domains beyond the home and educational contexts.

The worsening of conditions in the sector makes what was traditionally one of the better paid and more stable jobs in many Gaeltacht communities much less appealing to those who might otherwise be interested in working in this area. Somewhat unsurprisingly, since this interview was done, the co-op manager who I interviewed on an island in Donegal resigned to take up work unrelated to the Gaeltacht. Although a replacement has now been found, this process took some time and there was less interest in the position than might once have been expected. Indeed, despite unemployment being the main issue raised by locals when asked about the challenges of island life, when the manager's position was eventually filled it was by someone from the mainland.

As well as the financial difficulties of continuing to fund important services on a day-to-day basis despite budget cuts, I was also told that these austerity measures have impinged on the time that co-ops have to focus on local development. While quite possibly only ever announced as part of a project of political "kite-flying" to make the cuts that were implemented seem more reasonable, the proposed discontinuation of many other services in these communities has meant that a great deal of staff time in recent years was spent trying to resist even more severe cuts:

*C: [B]hí mé ar nós fear tine . . . Chuile chruinniú a bhí mé ag goil bhí mé ag iarraidh an tine seo a mhúchadh seachas ag déanamh forbairt pobail . . . So bhí go leor den bhliain seo caite ag goil ag cruinneachaí, troid, troid, troid, mar a bhíonn tú, ag rá le daoine, y'know, tá sé goil an-dochar a dhéanamh don [phobal] má leanann sibh ar aghaidh leis seo . . . Dá gcuirfeadh sé aon rud i gcoinne dream óg a bheith ag maireachtáil [san áit]...*

Further to the co-ops' role in providing critical local infrastructure, the delegation of much of the language planning duties in the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* to such groups has seen them receive a very significant extra duty. As with the other institutions charged with implementing this Act (see 5.8), in apparent indifference to the already overworked and under-resourced nature of the co-ops, this duty has been imposed on them at the same time as their budgets were significantly reduced.

By 2016, the average budget a Gaeltacht co-op received was €54,000, significantly lower than the €85,000 average received by comparable Community Development

Programmes outside the Gaeltacht. An umbrella group for the co-ops consequently demanded total funding be increased by €600,000 in the 2018 budget (CCCP, 2017). Despite the department responsible for the Gaeltacht also requesting significantly increased funding (Tuirisc.ie, 2018c), in 2018 the minister responsible for Gaeltacht policy confirmed during Dáil questions that the funding increase for 2018 was just €100,000. When divided amongst all 32 Gaeltacht co-ops, the average budget increase was therefore just €3,125 – a meagre amount compared to the extent of the cuts received since the recession began (Dáil Éireann, 2018b).

### 5.9.2 Pléaráca

Conamara-based Pléaráca began as a voluntary initiative in the early 1990s, receiving state funding in 1996 which allowed for the employment of two full-time staff. While primarily an arts and culture group, Pléaráca also explicitly aimed to combat social exclusion and the above-average levels of deprivation prevalent in much of the Conamara Gaeltacht (see 5.2.3). As well as providing opportunities for adults likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged, Pléaráca conducted a wide range of youth outreach work, including summer camps, book festivals, drama and writing workshops, and generally played an important part in the social life of the Conamara Gaeltacht (Tuirisc.ie, 2015b). For many years the group organised a festival of “sean nós singing, dancing, poetry readings, plays, community art, and sporting and children’s activities” which was held in September “when all the tourists are gone . . . [as] a celebration of selfhood, of personal and community identity, and not [as] a contrived pseudo-cultural show put on to satisfy the tourist gaze” (Denvir, 2002: 40). Furthermore, “[a] festival such as Pléaráca illustrates that the Gaeltacht has not (or not yet, at least) gone the moribund touristic route of the staged folkloric or pseudo-traditional event” (Denvir, 2002: 40). While primarily based in Conamara, Pléaráca regularly toured many of their events to other Gaeltachtaí, and indeed, to Wales and the *Gàidhealtachd* islands of Scotland as well.

Many of my informants in Galway spoke very fondly of Pléaráca, often commenting on its importance to the community as a whole. The following quote from a woman in her early thirties is typical of such accounts:

*G: Nuair a bhí mise óg . . . bhíodh mé ag dul ag an bPléaráca, bhíodh an Pléaráca ag tíocht ag an scoil, bhíodh muid ag déanamh comórtais ealaíona,*

*comórtais filíochta. Tháinig Louis de Paor . . . rinne sé ceardlann scríbhneoireachta linn. Agus ag cuimriú siar, níor thuig muid é ag an am, ach, bhfuil 's agat, rudaí den tsórt sin – tháinig Ríonach Ní Néill, rinne sí ceardlann drámaíochta linn. Tháinig Diarmuid de Faoite, rinne sé rudaí linn. Tháinig, bhí an oiread ag tíocht, bhí an oiread deiseannaí a'ainn nuair a bhí mise ag an meánscoil . . . Agus an rud a thaitnigh liomsa faoi sin, Pléaráca, mar shampla, bhí idir shean agus óg páirteach ann, ghabhfadh sean agus óg ag na comórtais. Bhíodh ceolchoirmeachaí acub. Is cuimhneach liom go raibh ceolchoirm acub ar an gCeathrú Rua. Bhí mise óg go maith, rud ollmhór. Tháinig daoine as chuile áit . . . Thóg sé an pobal uilig le chéile . . . Cineál Glastonbury na Gaeltachta is dóigh!*

The organisation, then, was clearly of great importance to the vitality of the Galway Gaeltacht, with there being obvious positive linguistic implications to bringing the generations together, as described by this interviewee, as well as great social value in their work reaching out to the most underprivileged members of the community. Like a great number of the “community sector” groups involved in fighting social exclusion (Bisset, 2015), however, Pléaráca had its funding drastically reduced post-2008.

Amongst the recommendations of *An Bord Snip Nua* (see 4.2.1) was the proposal to save €44m by cutting both the *Local Development Social Inclusion Programme* and the *Community Development Programme*, the schemes which funded groups such as Pléaráca. Noting that “these programmes aim to counter disadvantage [with] projects funded includ[ing] adult education courses, support for local enterprise initiatives and information provision for target groups”, *An Bord Snip* claimed that “[t]here is little evidence of positive outcomes for these initiatives” and as such they could be cut with minimal adverse effect (McCarthy et al., 2009b: 38).

With their funding severely reduced, Pléaráca’s directors took the decision in April 2015 to disband the organisation rather than continue in a substandard fashion, stating that their decreased budget meant that the organisation’s continued existence was no longer tenable (RnaG, 2015).

As with the discontinuation of other community development projects throughout the country (Bisset, 2015), the liquidation of Pléaráca has had a significant detrimental effect on the community, as a parent of two young adults brought up during Pléaráca’s heyday described:

*C: Ó tá bearna an-mhór fágtha, tá. An bearna is measa ar fad atá fágtha . . . ná sna scoileanna. Mar bhídís ag maoiniú dream a bhíodh ag plé le drámaíocht,*

*le scríbhneoireacht agus le filíocht . . . Go mór mór san idirbhliain bhíodh cúrsaí ar siúl acu agus bhí sé fíormhaith don dream a bhfuil spéis acu sa scríobh mar bhíodh siad ag scríobh drámaí nó filíocht nó próis. Bhíodar ag déanamh an-obair ar fad agus tá sé sin ar fad imithe. Tá an fhéile imithe, tá rudaí eile imithe freisin.*

Further to being engaged in such important development of young people's linguistic repertoires, the multiplier effect of groups such as Pléaráca for local businesses was noted by another Conamara resident:

*A: '[S]éard atá déanta ansin ná tá an infreastruchtúr pobal bainte óna chéile . . . agus caithfidh tú cuimhniú go, cuid mhaith den infreastruchtúr sin bhí rudaí eile crochta air. So abair na heagraíochtaí cosúil le MFG [Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta], Cumas, Pléaráca – ní hamháin go raibh siad ag comhlíonadh na ndualgais a bhain leis an scéim áirithe a bhí siad ag fáil maoiniú uaidh, ach bhíodar ag cur isteach ar scéimeanna eile agus ag déanamh obair eile chomh maith sa bpobal. So, y'know, bhíodar, bhí daoine fostaithe, bhí siad ag déanamh tograí a bhí ag fostú daoine eile agus bhí airgead ag goil thart sa bpobal, bhí sé ag coinneáil siopaí oscailte.*

One of my other informants, who himself was involved in founding Pléaráca, contended that the creation of an unfavourable environment for such groups was a result of the then government being anti-community empowerment, rather than being connected to budgetary restrictions:

*S: [R]inne an rialtas sin scrios ar an earnáil dheonach . . . Baineann sé le idé-eolaíocht i ndáiríre, ní bhaineann sé le airgead. Baineann sé le idé-eolaíocht mar bhí na dreamannaí seo róchriticiúil faoi pholasaí poiblí maidir le cúrsaí bochtanais i ndáiríre. Níor thaithnigh sé sin leis an rial[tas]...An tAire a bhí i gceannas ar chuid mhaith de na cúrsaí sin ag an am, Éamon Ó Cuív, níor thaithnigh sé sin leis. Agus rinne siad scrios i ndáiríre ar an earnáil . . . Bhí Pléaráca ar cheann de na heagraíochtaí a bhí pobalbhunaithe . . . Ach baineadh amach é as cúram faoin Roinn Coimirce Sóisialta, agus is ansin a thosaigh sé i dtosach báire. Agus, mar a déarfá, ba chuid den brief a bhí aige ná déileáil le cúrsaí bochtanais agus social exclusion . . . Agus de bharr Éamon Ó Cuív, cuireadh isteach é faoi Roinn na Gaeltachta agus Údarás na Gaeltachta agus ní raibh spéis dá laghad acu san agenda sin, mar a déarfá. Agus sa deireadh ní raibh siad sásta airgeadú a dhéanamh ar an rud agus sa deireadh dúirt siad “bhuel, look, muna bhfuil sibh sásta airgeadú a dhéanamh ar rud cén fáth a bhacfaidh muid leis?” Agus thit an rud as a chéile. Agus bhí sé sin ag déanamh go leor maítheas ó thaobh na Gaeilge . . . [N]í dóigh liom gur thit sé sin as a chéile mar gheall ar chúrsaí airgeadais.*

This distinction between ideology and economics is overly simplistic, however: further to ignoring the significant financial savings resulting from cutting such programmes, this argument overlooks the fact that an allegiance to neoliberal economics and efforts

to quash dissent and grassroots community empowerment are ultimately two sides of the same coin, as discussed in 5.6.1. A 2014 report on “government funding and social justice advocacy” (also referred to in 4.2.7 and 4.2.10.1) does, nonetheless, confirm the belief that the suppression of subversive voices was indeed a key factor in the cutting of funding for groups such as Pléaráca:

there was a compelling body of evidence of the manner in which the state had suppressed or actively prohibited advocacy, crossing the border from inhibition to an element of deliberation. The prime example was the Community Development Programme [which funded Pléaráca], where detailed documentation and case studies pointed to dissent as the most convincing explanation for its closure . . . It was evident that some issues were especially sensitive, such as development, education, women, childcare and corruption, with examples of organizations that had spoken out of turn having to repay grants (Harvey, 2014: 4).

While ultimately tracing the origins of this approach to before the onset of the crisis, the report goes on to detail a great number of strategies that were adopted by the state in recent years to silence oppositional groups (see also 5.6.1). In times of crisis the suppression of organised dissent is particularly crucial to the maintenance of the status quo, and the dramatic restructuring of the community sector is just one more example of the way in which the state used the 2008 crash as an opportunity to remake Irish society by deepening the hold of neoliberalism thereon. In doing so it has, as Bisset argues, “maintain[ed] the power and privilege of some while extending and deepening the suffering of others” (2015: 175; see also Mercille and Murphy, 2015).

The informant who noted the link between Pléaráca’s social justice work and its defunding went on to explain that such restructuring has led to a reduction of community ownership of other groups similar to Pléaráca:

*S: [A]n rud atá tarlaithe ar bhealach le cuid mhaith de na heagraíochtaí seo tá siad bainte ar ais ón bpobal. Bhíodh siad . . . i bhfad níos pobalbhunaithe ná atá anois. Tá siad curtha faoin gComhairle Contae, agus tá córas coistí ag an gComhairle Contae atá ag breathnú daonlathach ach tá rud chomh bloody casta, fiú ann mise, abair, agus tá spéiseanna agamsa sna rudaí sin, ní thuigim fós cén chaoi a n-oibríonn sé sin! . . . [T]á an oiread coistí anois éagsúil ag an gComhairle Contae agus tá na coistí sin mar buffer zone idir an Chomhairle Contae agus an pobal.*

As described in 4.2.4 regarding the abolition of the ÚnaG election, this increasing of the democratic deficit and centralisation of power was a key method used by the state

to manage the implementation of austerity. The removal of local level democratic accountability and the abolition of groups such as Pléaráca is thus readily interpreted as yet another example of the broader trend of neoliberalisation described throughout this thesis.

Fishman's sceptical attitude towards cultural festivals in which participants have such a good time that they forget afterwards that nothing much has changed in terms of the language's wider prospects is well known (1991: 91, 110, 398). As Fettes has noted, however, while surely insufficient in themselves, groups like Pléaráca and the events they organise are a key part of language revitalisation efforts, ensuring that the language is no longer "heard only at funerals" (1997: 315). By operating primarily in Conamara, Pléaráca also contributed significantly to the area's socioeconomic vitality, itself key to language maintenance. The group's dissolution, however, surely marked a low point for community vitality, and many of my informants hoped that a similar group will emerge in coming years. Like the case of the inner-city Community Development Programmes described by Bisset, "in a community where educational equality is extreme, the removal of such infrastructure has significant consequences" for all age groups (2015: 177). Groups like Pléaráca, as the Irish Congress of Trade Unions report on the rationalisation of the community sector described, "[b]uild social capital, active citizenship and participation in a democratic society" (B. Harvey, 2012: 9) and as such their suppression provides yet another example of the detrimental consequences of austerity not just for the Gaeltacht, but for Irish society as a whole.

## **5.10 Further observations on language use**

In addition to the numerous factors detailed thus far, during my fieldwork I made various other observations regarding language use that are also worthy of mention. As described in 3.2.2, detailed quantitative work published in recent years identifies the strongest remaining Irish-speaking areas where over 67% of the population speak Irish daily outside of the education system (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a; Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a), and it was in such category A communities that this research was conducted. While previous quantitative studies undoubtedly offer important insights into language practices in the Gaeltacht, ethnographic research adds a further degree of granularity to our understanding of this area, complementing statistical work with an additional level of epistemological "thickness".

The quantitative data (which cannot be directly referenced here due to ethical constraints requiring anonymity) show that in almost all the areas I studied over 50% of those aged 3-18 speak Irish daily outside the education system, which, from my own observations, does not seem implausible. Based on all my experiences, however, it is beyond doubt that it is overwhelmingly to their elders that children and teenagers speak Irish when outside of school. Amongst themselves, English is clearly the socially dominant language (see also Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a: 321-38). While several informants told me that at least some members of this age cohort speak Irish together in the absence of older people, throughout the entire duration of my fieldwork I did not see a single peer-to-peer interaction in Irish amongst the under-18 age group when they were not in the company of an older person. Coughlan's ethnographic work on Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht does, however, document peer group interactions through Irish in the absence of authority figures, although reports these to be the exception rather than the norm (Coughlan, forthcoming).

While Ó Giollagáin et al. described the dominance of English amongst young people even in category A areas in 2007, it is significant that language shift seems to have taken place very rapidly in recent years, as the following data illustrate. In Galway I was fortunate enough to be able to interview three siblings in one family, all young adults, in whose home I was staying. This first interview extract is from the oldest sibling, a 25-year old woman who lives and works in a city away from the Gaeltacht, but returns periodically:

*B: Céard faoin dream a bhí ar scoil leatsa, an labhrann sibh Gaeilge lena chéile nó an mbeadh níos mó Béarla ann?*

*S: Ó Gaeilge i gcónaí, yeah Gaeilge i gcónaí . . . Tá sé an-nádúrtha againn Gaeilge a labhairt lena chéile mar sin an chaoi a d'fhás muid suas.*

This response accords with my own observations of informal social interactions in the area, with it not being unusual for me to see those in their mid-to-late twenties speak Irish to each other.

The middle sibling, a woman aged 20 who also spends most of the year working in an urban environment, answered a similar question as follows:

*B: Agus céard faoin dream ar tháinig tú aníos leofa, an labhrann tú Gaeilge leofa sin?*

*M: Labhraim Gaeilge leis na leaids.*

Although the term “lads” is often used in Ireland to refer to mixed-gender groups, the interviewee confirmed that she did indeed mean that Irish was more common amongst the males in her peer group. In the relatively small age gap between this woman and her older sister, it would thus appear that females in this community have tended to shift away from Irish – a point on which this interviewee later elaborated. When discussing one of her female peers who is particularly reluctant to speak Irish she said

*M: [N]uair atá an cailín seo ann ní labhrann muid Gaeilge mar ní labhróidh sí linn é. Agus tá sé chomh aisteach mar tá an Ghaeilge aici. Bheadh cúpla lá labhróidh muid cúpla focal Gaeilge léi . . . ach ní labhróidh sí linne é unless go gcuirfeadh muid brú uirthi . . . Níor thaitin sé léi riamh, “níl mé ag iarraidh é a fhoghlaim, tá mé ag iarraidh Béarla a labhairt, níl sé goil tada a dhéanamh dhom, labhrann chuile dhuine Béarla, ní labhrann mórán daoine Gaeilge”, an sórt sin rud.*

Despite being a significant difference in comparison to the answer of her older sister, this gendered pattern of linguistic use is not overly surprising due to the well-known tendency for males to generally be more linguistically conservative and therefore often slower to shift to the dominant language (Gal, 1979: 167; Labov, 2001: 292; see also 5.3.1).

The third and youngest sibling, a man aged 18, told me that his peer group on the island was entirely English-speaking during in-group interactions:

*B: Nuair atá tú ag caitheamh ama le do chuid cairde thíos ag imirt pool san óstán, an labhrann sibh Gaeilge?*

*G: Á Béarla i gcónaí.*

As above, this response tallies with all my own observations – including talking to others in his peer group, seeing them socialise on a regular basis, asking their parents, etc. While based on data from only one family, we can nonetheless see a dramatic shift in both reported and observed language use within a very short time frame, one which accords with both statistical evidence for ongoing language shift in the Gaeltacht and wider sociolinguistic axioms. Within a space of seven years, to judge from the age gap between these informants, Irish appears to have gone from being the unmarked language spoken by even the youngest adults, to no longer being used peer-to-peer even amongst young males, who could be expected to be slower to shift to English



(see also Ó Curnáin 2012b: 107). Further research on this topic with a larger sample size would undoubtedly be productive.

This same young man elaborated on the language dynamics of the local pub where he socialises regularly:

*G: Labhródh na seandaoine Gaeilge amongst themselves agus dá mbeadh 's acu gur muidé atá ann agus tá 's acu go bhfuil Gaeilge againn, ansin caithfidh tú b'fhéidir dhá nóiméad ag caint Gaeilge leo agus cúpla soicind small talk agus imíonn tú, sin é, sin an t-aon Ghaeilge a labhrós tú agus ar ais ar an mBéarla.*

This youngest sibling went on to describe at some length his perceived reasoning for this shift amongst his age group. Several distinct but mutually reinforcing points emerged from this dialogue which are worth reflecting on, and which were also mentioned by many other informants.

First, a greater use of technology amongst his peers as they were growing up was mentioned:

*G: [T]á teilifís i mBéarla, tá idirlíon i mBéarla, má tá tú ag iarraidh goil ar Facebook, tá na posts ar fad i mBéarla . . . Bhí mé ar an X-bosca agus ag labhairt i mBéarla le chuile dhuine air sin. So bhí, chaill mise an Ghaeilge níos luaithe ná [a dheirfiúracha]. Chaill mise é nuair a bhí mé timpeall 13 – stop mise á labhairt den chuid is mó. Tháinig an teicneolaíocht isteach i mo shaol...*

It is of note that while his older siblings claimed to use Irish with at least some of their peers, when asked about the use of Irish on social media they both conceded that they only used English thereon. As more and more social interaction takes place via such platforms, this development has obvious consequences for minoritised language use.

Similarly, a father in Donegal recounted the conversation he had with his five-year-old upon hearing her advanced level of English for the first time during a family holiday in England:

*P: “Cá háit a d’fhoghlaim tú do chuid Béarla? Ní raibh 's agamsa go bhfuil Béarla mar sin agat!” “Á a dheaide, tá scoil bheag Béarla agamsa mé féin thíos i mo sheomra leapan ag coimhead Netflix”.*

Several other informants also made such observations regarding technology, including the following representative quote:

*D: Feicim na gasúir atá ag [iníon an fhir seo], Béarla acub ó bhí siad dhá bhliain d'aois. Agus gur Gaeilge uilig a labhrann sí leob sa mbaile agus an t-athair freisin. Agus ina dhiaidh sin tá...Mar chuile nóiméad a fhaigheann siad deis tá siad ag breathnú ar video eicínt nó tá siad ar an ríomhaire.*

While the increased use of technology was sure to have occurred regardless of the economic crash, it is of note that, as many other studies have shown (e.g. Warren, 2005; Rideout and Hamel, 2006; Piotrowski et al., 2015: 169, Domoff et al., 2017: 279), over-worked parents and those in lower income households are much more likely to use television and computers as “surrogate child minders”, thereby exposing their children to more of the very technologies which are charged with being such key drivers of language shift (see also 5.5.1).

A second factor proposed by the young male sibling from Galway as an explanation for his age group’s language shift was their greater communicative competence in English:

*G: [T]á Gaeilge sórt briste ag go leor acu, go leor acub.*

*B: Muise? D’aoisghrúpa?*

*G: Yeah, I mean breathnaigh ar mo chaighdeán.*

*B: Níl caill ar bith ort a mh’anam!*

*G: Níl mé in ann sentence a chuir le chéile gan focal Béarla ann [gáire].*

*B: Agus an mbeifeá ar chomhchaighdeán leis an dream eile?*

*G: Ó bheadh caighdeán níos measa ag go leor acub!*

*B: Muise?*

*G: Yeah i bhfad níos measa.*

This interviewee’s standard of Irish is indeed lower than his older sisters, with a much greater use of functional codeswitching and grammatical errors not made by his siblings, a code reminiscent of the “reduced Irish” described by Ó Curnáin (2012a; see also Lenoach, 2012; Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a: 300-20). The interviewee’s twenty-year-old sister also described her use of English as being a product of her greater fluency therein. While discussing the tendency of many of her peers to predominantly speak English she commented as follows:

*M: Ach see déanaim féin é amantaí . . . Ach is maith liom an Ghaeilge, táim ag iarraidh, nuair a bheas páistí a'm, táim ag iarraidh iad a thógáil le Gaeilge. Ach braithim orm féin go n-athraím ar an mBéarla cuid den am. Fiú ann ag caint cuid den am bíim ag caitheamh isteach focla Béarla ar nós nach n-úsáidim mo chloigeann ag soláthar an focal Gaeilge mar tá sé a'm i mBéarla. Tá sé aisteach.*

The breakdown of Irish as a distinctive marker of identity amongst young adults was another factor mentioned by the youngest of the three siblings I interviewed. He explained in considerable detail that when he was younger there was a group of young adults who aspired to seem older than they were, as young adults are wont to do. He told me that they demonstrated this by being diligently Irish-speaking, as the use of Irish was seen as characteristic of older community members:

*G: Ní gheobhfhadh tú [é] ach ó na daoine a bhí idir, idir 18-24 agus a bhí ag iarraidh a bheith ag breathnú sórt, a bhí ag iarraidh a bheith níos mó ar nós [daoine níos sine] so bhíodar i gcónaí ag cur béim ar an nGaeilge mar bheadh Gaeilge i gcónaí á labhairt [acusan] le chéile, agus bhíodar ag iarraidh go mbeadh chuile dhuine sórt níos cosúil [leis an seandream].*

I asked others in the area about this phenomenon and they corroborated it – indeed, I was told they even had a nickname for such individuals, *na seanleaidís óga*: “the young old lads”. When pressed as to whether any of his peer group had such a mind-set he replied as follows:

*B: Agus an bhfuil éinne atá, abair, 18 anois a bheadh mar sin?*

*G: No, níl níos mó.*

*B: Bhfuil sé sin imithe?*

*G: Bhuel is mise an generation anois atá 18, níl muide mar sin ar chor ar bith, tá sórt...*

*B: Éinne?*

*G: Nah, not duine.*

Lenoach (2012: 23) convincingly argues that such a breakdown in the use of a minoritised language as a strong marker of identity is inherently linked to the lack of communicative ability such individuals have in the language. This renegotiation of youth identities in recent years is also reminiscent of Giddens' work on reflexive identity construction as a trait of globalised modernity, with increased information flows and the destabilisation of traditional social roles seeing people express their identities

in new ways, particularly via consumerism (Giddens, 1991; see also O'Rourke and Walsh, 2015, however, on ways in which new speakers can be attracted to Irish as part of such a project of identity construction).

While sometimes dismissed as being merely a product of the oppositional nature of teenage identity, the same pattern of English dominance is also clear amongst much younger children. During my stay on an island in Donegal I would get a lift every day from the local minibus driver, who would often have his two-year-old son with him. Despite living on the far side of a remote island with a majority Irish-speaking population and having two local parents who speak Irish to each other, this young boy would invariably respond to his father's Irish – and to mine – in English. His father seemed unconcerned by this, stating nonchalantly that his son will learn Irish at school, and that it was from television he learned English, because, as the father claimed, “*níl teilifís ar bith i nGaeilg*”. This striking pattern of behaviour brought to mind Harrison's description of the youngest speakers in a minoritised language community acting as “tiny social barometers” which gauge the value of the languages they hear around them and tailor their linguistic behaviour accordingly (2007: 8).

In accordance with Ó Curnáin's (2012a, 2015) assessment of those born post-1960 as being speakers of “non-traditional” Irish, this bus driver, who was in his 30s, told me that his parents' generation had a much wider vocabulary and used far less English while speaking Irish. Similar opinions were expressed by others in his peer group in different settings. Again according with Ó Curnáin's assessment, it is unsurprising to see the children of such post-traditional speakers having a significantly reduced competency in Irish themselves, or shifting outright to English as the bus driver's young son appears to have done.

Every day while walking past the playground on this same island I would hear only English, something which the co-op manager verified as being the normal state of affairs and linked to the presence of in-migrants in the community (see also 5.5.2):

*B: An gceapann tú go labhrann páistí an oileáin Gaeilge lena chéile?*

*M: Labhrann siad ar an scoil. But bím ag éisteacht leofa amuigh san ionad súgradh agus ó! . . . Bhfuil 's agat nuair a bhogann teaghlach istigh agus Béarla acu, aistríonn na páistí uilig achan áit go Béarla in áit iad sin a bheith ag caint i nGaeilg. Agus cé go bhfuil páistí more or less 'na sponges agus tógann siad*

*suas cúig teanga, y'know, nuair a bhogann siad sin isteach... Agus tá an scoil iontach maith, Gaeilg go hiomlán a bhíonn ann agus caithfidh mé a ráit tá caighdeán iontach sa scoil acu. Ach just chíonn muid iad ag teacht amach geata na scoile agus bíonn siad ag caint i mBéarla!*

While much of the information presented here is indicative of long-established patterns of language shift and it is unlikely that the data would be vastly different if not for the recession, it is of significance that this shift seems to have taken place very rapidly in recent years. Indeed, most of my youngest informants' formative teenage years coincided directly with the recession. While this time frame should not, perhaps, be afforded undue salience, it is nonetheless an interesting point, especially considering the well-attested tendency for macro-level economic changes to impact people's ideologies, even on an unconscious level (Malmendier and Nagel, 2011; Inglehart, 2018; see also the discussion of psychology's "impressionable years hypothesis" and recessionary periods in Giuliano and Spilimbergo, 2014). Further to the cuts and social disruption described above, this awareness of the recession and its implications for such marginal communities may well help explain Ó Giollagáin and Charlton's finding in their 2015 update to the 2007 CLS study that language shift has occurred at an even more rapid rate than the 2007 study predicted (2015a: 2).

Through weakening the all-important home-family-neighbourhood-community nexus (Fishman, 1991: 95) in which Irish survives, the recession clearly contributed to the decline of Irish in the Gaeltacht. The 2016 census results illustrated this starkly, with the 11.2% decrease in the number of daily speakers of Irish outside the education system in the Gaeltacht being in dramatic contrast with the modest growth seen for the same category during the Celtic Tiger (see 5.2.2). While significant reductions in coming years were predicted by the CLS in 2007 (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2007a), the Great Recession that began the following year exacerbated these trends by removing or diminishing much of the support infrastructure on which the Gaeltacht had come to depend. In light of all that has been described in this and the previous chapter, it can hardly be a surprise that the standing of Irish in the Gaeltacht went from bad in 2008, to much worse by 2018.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

Striking as they may appear, the issues described in this chapter are but a microcosm of the enormous suffering caused by austerity both in Ireland and internationally over

the last decade. Although much of the literature on neoliberalism conceptualises it as the hollowing out of the state (cf. Weller et al., 1997), as has been seen, in reality its effects often amount to the hollowing out of society, with a great many of the social structures key to the vibrancy of Gaeltacht (and other) communities having been eroded considerably in recent years.

In *Reversing Language Shift* Fishman stated that “[f]ostering small-scale community life is difficult but crucial for RLS” (1991: 6). Many other well-known authors in the field have made similar statements, including Romaine’s observation that “arguments in favor of doing something to reverse language death are ultimately about preserving and sustaining viable communities” (2006: 456; see also Crystal, 2000: 154; Mac Donnacha, 2000: 19; Spolsky, 2004: 8; Valiquette, 1998: 107; Williams, 2014: 243; etc.).

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, however, the Great Recession and the intensification of neoliberal policies that accompanied it had the exact opposite effect on the Gaeltacht, negatively impacting the “home-family-neighbourhood-community” nexus (Fishman, 1991: 95) so key to language maintenance in a huge variety of ways, some of the most notable of which have been discussed here. While explicitly language-focused revitalisation programmes were adversely affected since 2008, so too were many of the supports for the wider community vitality called for by Fishman, Romaine, et al., thereby presenting enormous challenges for sustaining Irish-speaking communities in the coming years.

Commenting on the difficulties of creating environments suitable for the maintenance of threatened languages such as Irish, Mufwene has recently observed that

[L]inguists and language teachers have no control over the conditions that sustain a language, despite their expertise. That is, revitalization efforts should also address the nonlinguistic factors that produced the socioeconomic ecologies that are disadvantageous to the relevant languages. Just think how unproductive it would be if environmentalists only provided food to an endangered species while keeping it in the same deleterious ecosystem (Mufwene, 2017: e308).

Although greatly improved by being informed by the expertise of linguists of various types, as has been shown, language revitalisation policies (like so much of public policy) are ultimately subservient to the requirements of international capital. This

chapter has explored how the tension between these interests and minoritised language promotion has recently played out in Ireland, a country which is supposedly committed to revitalising its “first national language”, but which has readily adapted itself to become a prototypical “competition state” which serves the needs of capital above those of its inhabitants (Kirby and Murphy, 2011). It is hoped that this chapter, by drawing attention to the mutually constitutive nature of the local and global factors affecting language vitality, has helped provide evidence for the position expressed by Mufwene and others, and illustrated some of the social mechanisms through which the neoliberal hegemony that is enacted by competition states impacts threatened language communities like the Gaeltacht.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In attempting to address important deficits in LPP research to date, this thesis set out to answer the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between the economic ideology of neoliberalism and the Gaeltacht?
- How did the Great Recession which began in 2008 affect Gaeltacht areas in Galway and Donegal in socioeconomic and sociolinguistic terms?
- In a country in which the state is ostensibly committed to language revitalisation, how are language policies shaped by dominant economic orthodoxies and why did these result in such severe cuts to Irish-language provision in the wake of the 2008 crash?

This conclusion will offer an overview of the key findings that emerged from this research. It will reflect on the implications of these findings for language revitalisation in Ireland and offer some more general thoughts on the intersection of language loss and economic forces in a time of immense social, political and economic upheaval.

### **6.2 Summary of research findings**

Writing five years after the onset of the Great Recession, Williams stated that

the question to be asked is whether or not such minority language groups are experiencing disproportionately more cutbacks and more than their due share of pain at the expense of collective gain. That is, is there anything particular about the nature of language policies and programmes that make them particularly vulnerable to the fiscal demands of austerity and budget reduction (Williams, 2013: 10).

This thesis has taken up Williams' challenge and endeavoured to address this issue by examining the ways in which the fallout from the 2008 crash resulted in significant reforms of both overt and covert Irish-language policy, and how the socioeconomic disruptions of this period affected Irish-speaking communities in Galway and Donegal.



With Chapters 2 and 3 having presented a discussion on the nature of neoliberalism and the 2008 crash, along with a review of pertinent literature and my ethnographic methodology, Chapter 4 proceeded to explore how and why language revitalisation policies in Ireland underwent such an intense process of neoliberalisation post-2008. Although having initially proposed many of the key reforms that were ultimately implemented in Irish-language policy since 2008, the report of *An Bord Snip Nua* – the main roadmap for the state’s austerity policies – has previously received very little attention in discussions of Irish LPP. This report and the *Memorandum of Understanding* agreed with the IMF-ECB-EC “Troika” which supervised the running of the Irish economy between 2010-13 fundamentally informed the content of subsequent LPP developments. Indeed, two of the most significant reforms of Irish-language policy in the last several decades – the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030* and the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* – were both introduced while the economy was under the direction of the Troika, a fact which even literature most critical of these policies fails to address (e.g. Ó Giollagáin, 2014b).

These trying economic circumstances clearly affected both the content and implementation of these and other policies – with the *20-Year Strategy* being largely unimplemented since its introduction and the *Gaeltacht Act* being voted through the Dáil by the governing coalition despite significant opposition from both language groups and opposition parties. Although over 150 amendments were proposed to the *Gaeltacht Act*, all of these were rejected by the government. Given that this legislation constituted an official response to the well-documented sociolinguistic crisis facing the Gaeltacht, the lack of engagement with such proposals does not bode well for the long-term viability of the language in its heartland communities, particularly when combined with the fraught nature of the Act’s implementation, an ethnographic account of which was offered in 5.8.

Such challenges regarding “overt” language policy have been exacerbated by developments in “covert” policy (Shohamy, 2006), such as the severe, disproportionate budgetary cutbacks that many Gaeltacht institutions received,

including the Gaeltacht development authority ÚnaG, which lost 73.7% of its budget between 2008-15. Tellingly, comparable non-Gaeltacht institutions such as Enterprise Ireland and the IDA were not targeted in anything like the same manner during this time. Austerity also left its mark on numerous other language support structures, seeing the closure of 16 of 19 voluntary sector language promotion groups and cuts to Irish-language media funding. Overall, by 2017 capital expenditure on the Gaeltacht and islands was €10.9m, having fallen from €75.7m in 2008. This was the case despite overall public expenditure having reached 90% of its 2008 level by 2018. Furthermore, as section 4.2.4 described, proposed expenditure in this area for 2018-27 is only slightly more than *half* the 2006-16 spend, the severe post-2008 cuts that occurred during this time notwithstanding. Irish, however, continues to be taught as a compulsory subject in schools throughout the country and it must be noted that this aspect of language revitalisation policy did not involve significant cutbacks. Nonetheless, figures regarding Gaeltacht-specific expenditure clearly highlight the extent of state “rollback” in the field of language policy in Ireland, a development eminently characteristic of neoliberal policy regimes (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Another area in which the Great Recession was seen to have had indirect, but very significant implications for top-down language policies is in public service reform. In recent years an oft-repeated discourse amongst Irish speakers is that significant numbers of public servants are “opposed” to Irish and thus work to render top-down language policies ineffective. Such opinions are expressed in both journalistic and academic commentary (e.g. Thejournal.ie, 2013a; Ó Giollagáin, 2014b: 102). Challenging this belief as being overly simplistic, a detailed study of the neoliberal “New Public Management” rationalisation measures implemented in the public sector since 2008 was offered in 4.2.9. In contrast to popular, individualist accounts, this “unprecedented change for the Irish public service” (MacCarthaigh, 2017: 161) was proposed as being a much likelier, structural explanation for the failure of policies such as the *Official Languages Act 2003*. The non-implementation of the 2003 Act has increased significantly since the crash (Coimisinéir Teanga, 2017b), seemingly due to

increased workloads and reduced resources meaning public servants simply have more pressing concerns than implementing Irish-language schemes.

With neoliberalism being a hegemonic ideological force conditioning behaviour at both the individual and state level, Chapter 4 concluded with some observations on how this ideology directly contradicts key requirements of language revitalisation measures. Not only is neoliberalism fundamentally opposed to social planning (cf. Hayek, 2006 [1944]), of which language planning is, of course, a form, but it actively dismantles the sort of redistributive economic policies that are invariably necessary to sustain linguistic minorities. Furthermore, the precarious living conditions neoliberalism generates for so much of the world's population serve to turn people away from the pluralist values that are fundamental to arguments in favour of defending cultural diversity, a point well documented in sociological and political science literature on attitude formation (e.g. Inglehart, 2018).

Building on Chapter 4's policy analysis, the results of extensive ethnographic research, including 52 interviews, conducted in 2015 and 2016 in some of the strongest remaining "category A" Gaeltacht areas in Galway and Donegal were presented in Chapter 5. In addition to examining the micro-level consequences of many of the macro-level policy reforms documented in the previous chapter, various socioeconomic consequences of the crisis not related to language policy *per se*, but with distinct implications for language vitality, were discussed. Chief amongst these, perhaps, were transformations in the labour market, particularly the collapse of the construction sector, deindustrialisation and the closure of businesses in the hospitality industry, an issue which was particularly pronounced in Donegal. In addition to the rise in unemployment caused by such developments, the closure of pubs and hotels has led to an increase in young people socialising outside the Gaeltacht, with detrimental implications for language reproduction, not least due to likely increasing rates of linguistic exogamy. The tourist industry was also hit particularly hard by the recession, with attendance at summer language colleges in particular falling sharply as people's disposable income declined. Evidence was presented

which suggests that the recent increase in the use of English in the “linguistic landscape” of various Gaeltacht communities was connected to attempts at attracting tourists in light of reduced employment opportunities in other sectors.

With emigration having increased enormously throughout Ireland as a result of the recession, particularly in rural areas, peripheral communities such as the Gaeltacht areas of Galway and Donegal inevitably experienced significant population loss post-2008. The extent and consequences of this were discussed, with the disproportionate emigration of the young adult cohort which is most likely to form families (making them crucial for continued intergenerational transmission of Irish) being noted as another particularly detrimental consequence of the recession in terms of community and linguistic vitality.

While drastic, the reduction of support for the Gaeltacht did not go unchallenged during this time. Many communities attempted to resist state policies through the anti-austerity campaigns of groups such as Guth na Gaeltachta, described in 5.6.1. Although met with some success, the state was quick to clamp down on such efforts and the organisation was thus relatively short-lived. Furthermore, Guth na Gaeltachta received very little solidarity from official Irish-language promotion groups who, in a classic example of divide and rule tactics, were fearful of being abolished under the process of rationalisation they were undergoing at the same time (see 4.2.6). The disbanding of the Pléaráca arts and social outreach group (5.9.2) was a further example of how dissent against official policy measures was treated in the Gaeltacht during the crisis – a phenomenon echoed throughout many other areas of Irish society during this time (Harvey, 2014).

With state support for the Gaeltacht having fallen so severely post-2008, it is unsurprising that many communities and groups I witnessed attempted to overcome the difficulties this caused via recourse to unorthodox measures such as “Corporate Social Responsibility” grants and crowdfunding campaigns. Despite being another way in which community agency was exercised positively in the face of the cutbacks, by conceding almost entirely

to neoliberal notions of the role of the state and seeing the maintenance of rural communities as a matter for corporate charity, not concerted state policy, this tendency potentially sees communities sow the seeds of their own destruction.

According with the widespread disruption detailed in this thesis, the 2016 census reported an 11.2% decrease in daily speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht outside the education system since 2011, a drop which dramatically contrasts with the moderate growth in the same category shown in the previous census. While this decline in the vitality of Irish is to a large degree the continuation of centuries of marginalisation, the immense disruption caused by the recession in a short time frame clearly exacerbated this trend. This period, as was shown, proved particularly detrimental to the “home-family-neighbourhood-community” nexus which Fishman has argued is of crucial importance to language maintenance (1991: 95), with the 2016 figures providing quantitative demonstration of this fact.

As noted above, throughout this thesis the argument has been made that the disproportionate nature of the cuts visited upon the Gaeltacht since the crash was largely a result of the inherent antipathy of neoliberalism towards both social planning and redistributive economic policies. Although the vast majority of Irish society suffered under austerity during this time, so extensive were the cuts to Gaeltacht support schemes that Machiavelli's infamous advice that “injuries should be done all together” is brought to mind (2003: 38). Referring to work by Klein (2007), Mirowski (2013) and Krugman (2015), it was argued that the crisis presented an instance of “punctuated equilibrium” whereby the state had the opportunity to radically intensify an incrementalist process of withdrawal from the sphere of language revitalisation which had been taking place over the preceding decades. While the reduction in support for the Gaeltacht was both severe and rapid, rather than demonstrating any particularly anti-Irish sentiment on behalf of the political class, it has been argued that these cuts reflect the extent of neoliberal hegemony both in Ireland and internationally, with neoliberal “competition states” (Kirby and Murphy,

2011) having little interest in such “culturalist” spheres. The fact that much of the Gaeltacht population, particularly in stronger Irish-speaking areas, is on the lower end of the class scale made them all the more likely to be affected disproportionately by the cuts, with research both in Ireland and internationally showing austerity hits more vulnerable sections of society hardest (Bisset, 2015: 175-7; Varoufakis, 2016). The Irish case thus clearly illustrates the precarious position that minoritised languages that are dependent on state support can find themselves in during times of fiscal crisis (see also Williams, 2013; Wilson et al., 2015: 266).

Although much literature on Irish-language revitalisation in the last ten years has focused on linguistic issues (e.g. Ó Murchadha, 2012; Péterváry et al., 2014; Ó hÍfearnáin and Walsh, 2018), as Edwards has stated: “failure to fully come to grips with external facts, pressures and attitudes is tantamount to treating language in isolation – the cardinal sin committed in so many treatments [of LPP]” (2007: 116). With the greatest economic crisis in the history of the Irish state – and the second most severe in the history of industrial capitalism – occurring during this past decade, this thesis has attempted to move away from the tendency to look at Irish-language policy “in isolation” and examine the wider structural issues that are of crucial importance to the success of almost all efforts to reverse language shift. In doing so, I have sought to avoid what Beck et al. have termed “methodological nationalism”, defined as an “insistence on interpreting every social phenomenon within . . . the frame of reference of the nation-state” (2003: 28). While attention has been drawn to the role of transnational economic forces in determining the success or failure of language revitalisation efforts, this is not to imply a totally deterministic reading of the sociology of language. As is well-documented, the success of language revitalisation efforts invariably depends on a multitude of factors (Fettes, 1997). This work does, however, add empirical weight to the great many allusions in LPP literature to the centrality of economic forces in driving language loss and extinction, some of which were referenced in section 1.1. In doing so, it has echoed Engels’ contention that

it is not, as people try here and there conveniently to imagine, that the economic position produces an automatic effect. Men make their history themselves, only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones (Engels, 1894).

While the success of Irish-language policy is most undeniably dependent on a host of various factors, in light of the findings demonstrated in this work, Engels' position would appear to be of distinct relevance to the field of LPP in Ireland.

### **6.3 The loss of the Gaeltacht and the threat of the next recession**

Irish, as Fishman noted (1991: 122), is in many ways exceptional for a language of its size, having an institutional support network that few other minoritised languages could hope for. 2008-18 saw an immense weakening of these supports, however, as the Irish state moved ever closer to the *laissez-faire* disinterest which characterises most nation-states' attitudes to the fate of linguistic minorities within their territories. Nonetheless, despite the extensiveness of recent reforms, Irish still has an array of supports that leave it in a stronger position than many other languages with similarly sized speaker populations. If the neoliberalisation of Irish-language policy which was explored in this thesis continues, however, Irish may be an exceptional case no longer, becoming instead yet another example of the inability of so many nation-states to adequately support endangered language communities (cf. Fishman, 1991: 3).

While the Irish economy was growing rapidly at the time of writing, the structural challenges which recently caused such disruption for Irish-language revitalisation continue to loom large over this field. Indeed, the continuation of the trend towards state rollback from supporting revitalisation measures is almost certainly set to be the case. Further to proposed expenditure on the Gaeltacht for 2018-27 being much lower than the amount spent between 2006-16, as was noted above, the next recessionary period will surely require further

cuts to state expenditure on social policy. Whenever this next economic downturn occurs – and it is well-established in economics that another major crash will undoubtedly occur in due course – further cuts to institutions such as ÚnaG or the department responsible for the Gaeltacht could well leave them essentially defunct, being that they are now so much weaker than they were in 2007. The magnitude of this threat is heightened by the fact that throughout 2018 fears were expressed by the IMF that the world may well be heading towards another crash, as protectionist trade policies take effect globally and the increase in consumer debt that helped overcome the Great Recession approaches unsustainable levels (IMF, 2018). Furthermore, with language shift continuing apace, were another economic crisis to befall the Irish state, cuts to Gaeltacht expenditure will be all the easier to justify as we approach a “post-Gaeltacht” era in which such communities are not significantly distinct linguistically from the rest of Ireland.

Nonetheless, despite the extent of the forces which minoritised the language historically and the magnitude of the threats currently stacked against it, Irish continues to be transmitted within its heartland communities, albeit tenuously. Moreover, there are still thousands of “new speakers” of the language throughout the remainder of the country. As Hindley has noted, however, “much of the romantic appeal for learning Irish will die with the Gaeltacht” (1990: 253).<sup>7</sup> Further to the end of such “romantic appeal”, the loss of these distinct ethno-linguistic communities will see a key source of opportunities to learn the language outside of the classroom setting disappear, an experience which has been vital to the creation of tens of thousands of new speakers of Irish over the last century, this author included. With there being few examples internationally of languages that continue to be transmitted once they are no longer spoken as a vernacular in any bounded territorial community, the long-term prospects for Irish can therefore hardly be seen as bright.

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<sup>7</sup> While broadly supporting Hindley’s contention, recent research on new speakers shows that while the Gaeltacht is highly valorised by many, it is not universally seen as essential (Walsh, O’Rourke and Rowland, 2015: 23-9).



## 6.4 Conclusion: language revitalisation in a time of crises

The vast extent of language loss occurring throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century which was discussed in 1.1 is, of course, far from the only drastic challenge facing humanity at this juncture. Indeed, we currently face enormous, existential threats to the very future of our species – with runaway climate change, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and the risk of nuclear armageddon ranking high amongst these in the estimation of many analysts and international bodies.

Although the triumphalist ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism was seriously challenged by the 2008 crash, it remains dominant, albeit in an increasingly “zombified” form (Green and Lavery, 2017: 79). International political developments since 2016, including Brexit and the resurgence of various nativist and fascist movements across the planet, have led commentators such as Blyth and Matthijs (2017: 218-9) to interpret the *political* crisis currently befalling neoliberalism as the lagged response to the *economic* crisis of 2008. Indeed, the resultant tension between the economic compulsion of capitalism to globalise (cf. Friedman’s “golden straitjacket” (2000: 101-11)) and the political compulsion towards “neo-nationalism” which is currently present in many states (Blyth and Matthijs, 2017: 222) is emerging as a fundamental conflict of our age. As many authors have described, the political turmoil resulting from this conflict is inherently linked not just to the Great Recession, but to the wider emergence of neoliberalism as a global hegemony over the last four decades (Blyth, 2016; Inglehart, 2018).

In the face of challenges of such immense proportions, the most powerful argument for being involved in language revitalisation is now surely that it requires us to challenge the “runaway civilization” (Fettes, 1997; see also Giddens, 2002) that is responsible for so many of the difficulties humanity currently faces. Without developing large-scale systemic solutions to our current crises as a matter of urgency, we face not just the continued loss of linguistic and biological diversity on an extraordinary scale, but potentially the destruction of the very planet we call home.

While a discussion of the sort of alternative political and economic models that may help overcome these major, totalising catastrophes as well as the challenges faced by speakers of minoritised languages has been beyond the scope of this work, examples such as the “democratic confederalism” of the Rojava revolution in Kurdistan offer a glimpse of what a society based on direct democracy, environmentalism, feminism and explicit protection for linguistic minorities may look like (Jones, 2018). In light of the findings of this study, it is clear that this topic is ripe for future research.

Although language revitalisation is certainly a worthy cause in and of itself, as Audre Lorde reminds us “[t]here is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives” (2007 [1982]: 138), and so attempts to secure justice and recognition in the field of LPP will necessarily intersect with other areas of progressive social struggle. Indeed, without engaging with such wider struggles, as this thesis has attempted to show, the best efforts of language revitalisation advocates can have little hope of being effective long-term. Language revitalisation is thus best understood as a “good problem” (Fishman, 1991: 6), one whose resolution can contribute to solving the many other challenges we face. Without recognising this fact and acting accordingly, activist efforts at reversing language shift can only be destined to remain a hopelessly peripheral endeavour in an age of such enormous, intersectional crises, meaning that the mass extinction of linguistic diversity will thus come to be seen as just one of the many melancholic characteristics that defined the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## **Appendix: English translations of Irish-language extracts**

p. 12-3:

It is high time to clearly acknowledge that the revival of Irish will involve significant expenditure, expenditure which cannot be avoided if we want the language to survive. It is not enough to intend to save Irish unless there is another intention, equally determined, to provide the financial assistance that this requires (An Coimisiún um Athbheochan na Gaeilge, 1963: 85).

p. 13:

English is of great value as an international language in matters of communication, trade and tourism and as a medium of participation in affairs all over the world (Government of Ireland, 1965: 11).

p. 19:

P: I think that it was a major backwards step in '93 when the Department of the Gaeltacht was abolished. And the strangest thing about it was there wasn't much opposition to it from Irish speakers at the time. And that meant that up until 1993 there was a department of state in the country that was working and operating entirely through Irish. The only one. That was abolished when arts and heritage and those things were brought in. And now we're only a small part of the department, that's operating through Irish. I dunno how many people work for the department, 300 maybe. Maybe 50 of those can speak Irish.

p. 85:

M: There was a recommendation if you go back to the recommendations that Colm McCarthy and the second Bord Snip had, to get rid of the department and to get rid of Údarás na Gaeltachta and get rid of y'know almost every institution that had to do with Irish. So they were under pressure, they were under attack, but a decision was made to keep them and to keep Údarás and others but it's like that's the present – "here you can keep them but we're going to destroy them"

p. 88 (passage 1):

like a corpse

p. 88 (passage 2):

more marginalised than ever in the civil service

p. 92:

M: Both of those things came in but no extra resources were made available really to do that work. In any other government policy they'd understand that there'd be a cost associated with implementing a policy as big as that and as widespread as that and extra resources would be made available. Y'know it's the opposite of that – they took money from the two biggest institutions connected to it, regarding funding . . . So y'know they're not undertaking this seriously if they're not making the resources available too.

p. 92-3:

B: Looking at it historically, if you go back maybe 15 years or whatever, we achieved, the Irish-speaking community achieved certain victories, with a struggle, as you don't achieve anything without a struggle. But there were things like TG4, for example, the status of Irish in Europe, the language act – and again nobody was completely happy

but they were there. And we got a language commissioner, and particularly that we got a language commissioner that was that strong. My own opinion is that that scared certain people and that scared the civil service . . . They weren't used to dealing with the likes of Seán Ó Cuirreáin [the first commissioner] and that they had to accept this, be serious about it. And it was clear that some of this [the Gaeltacht Act] was a counter attack . . . That's the natural result of that counter attack, it was extremely weak. It was incredibly weak with regards to the political system that they weren't even willing to accept even one amendment.

p. 96:

A: With regard to the Údarás, you were talking about a capital budget of up to twenty, twenty-five million or something like that and that's now down to six million. So there's, y'know, an enormous decrease in that that budget and if you compare that to, for example, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, there's no doubt but there's, as you might say, a certain message there.

p. 96-7:

S: There's a huge connection or link between an organisation's budget and . . . the results they have. The difference I saw, when I started out we'd have a capital budget of 26 million. The executives were able to go out and be confident in themselves that if they met an investor or if an investor was making inquiries they could be strong and say "we can help you, we can help you". Now there's no question about that and let there be no question. So when the capital budget falls to six or eight million, maybe the executives will be saying the same thing but . . . they'll say, "well do you have a budget?"

p. 97:

É: You're not a player anymore. People don't talk about us, we aren't talking on the radio, people think we've lost the battle. That's all to do with the catastrophic cut backs we had. And the other thing is, now there's such close monitoring of everything we do. And the thing they say about neoliberalism, reductive, reductivism . . . reductivity. Everything is cut back. There's huge monitoring of everything. There's more monitoring of everything because the budgets are so tight.

p. 98 (first passage):

M: Up to 2008, 2009 maybe, they were effective. It was great, you were able to go in and have a meeting with Pádraig Ó hAoláin [the then chief executive] or Jim Keogh who was in charge of employment and industry. But after the budgets were cut, and that's what happened with the Údarás, and this is significant too . . . When people were in the Údarás, they'd started out with Gaeltarra Éireann and were approaching retirement age in 2008-9. And the big packages came . . . Some of them only got two weeks' notice and the gun was put to their heads and they were told if you leave by the end of the month you'll be on the old pension, if you don't you'll be on the new pension. It was a no brainer for all the boys. And they lost a whole swathe of people. And that really hurt the Údarás. It was an accident, seen as Gaeltarra Éireann was founded [at that time] and the leadership of the whole thing was lost.

p. 98 (second passage):

É: But the big difference now, Ben, is that there are 21 companies in the estate employing 430. There were 21 companies in 1998 employing 1,300. So the companies that we have now are employing less people.

p. 98-9:

É: The companies that left were mostly traditional manufacturing companies . . . That work all went to Asia, to China, to India, to Mexico . . . They didn't close, except for

one, they moved. That's the important thing, they moved. Because you can get 20 workers in India for the pay one worker here gets.

p. 100 (first passage):

A: I think if you go out and ask people on the street they'll say it didn't bother them one way or the other.

p. 100 (second passage):

C: The people of this area wouldn't be thinking of Údarás na Gaeltachta. They know that they're connected to the business park, but the average person, that's all they'd know.

p. 100 (third passage):

G: I remember long ago the Údarás election and oh, it would cause such a stir. Oh, there'd be so much talk about it! And people would be pulling down posters and putting posters up and down . . . And say if you wanted planning permission for your house – as it's so hard to get planning permission – say if you'd spoken to some politician and they'd say "oh I'll be able to help you with that". Oh, it'd be some craic. And when they came to the door you'd give it to them! There was more interest, I have to say, in the Údarás election than in the national election. As you knew these people, you'd see them everywhere. And, y'know, you'd be saying "I'll give you my vote if you mend that road. And until I see a lorry pulling in here beside the house [you won't get it] . . . And that's how you got things done. Now right or [wrong], I dunno – that's how it worked. Yeah, it's terrible it doesn't exist anymore.

p. 100-1:

M: Fine Gael and Labour changed that and they got rid of the election and now people are appointed to the management board of the Údarás and the standard of people they are appointing . . . Do you see that hen house down there? . . . I wouldn't put the



people they're appointing to the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta in charge of that fuckin hen house.

B: Really?

M: Yeah. Timeservers. They can't get a place on the County Council. They stand for that and they fail. So local people aren't willing to elect them to the County Council so the parties say we'll put you up for appointment to the management board of Údarás na Gaeltachta, you're so fuckin shite at everything else, we'll put you on the fuckin management board of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

B: [laughs]

M: But that's the truth! . . . Even when there was an election, what did Fianna Fáil do in fuckin county Galway – a man who couldn't speak Irish?! And he got in! . . . See down in the pub, so long as there was no one from the Údarás there everyone would agree with me.

p. 101:

S: If there weren't things to do with me, I wouldn't speak. [Another board member] said to me a few times "hey are you listening to this?! We're talking about your area!" And there was me asleep! [laughs]

p. 102-3:

B: What about morale in the organisation . . . ?

É: [points his finger down to the floor to show it's low]

B: Really?

É: Very bad.

B: I saw what was on Tuairisc.ie.

É: 100% accurate. Things are worse than that even.

B: Really? And when did that start?

É: Three or four years ago.

B: Because of...?

É: Rationalisation.

B: Work conditions and so on?

É: Yes. A third of the staff are gone, when someone leaves we're not allowed to recruit someone new. Much more work to do with less people, people at the top, pressure from the department trying to narrow the whole thing in, they don't want to implement this or that. They have the challenge and they're on a fifth of the budget they were ten years ago. They have 30% less staff, the staff they have are old. No one new is coming in. They fell out with the trade union. They want to push these things forward without any partnership, without any consultation. The management have lost two votes of confidence by 70% in the last two months. The management are pressuring, bullying people.

p. 103:

B: Basically the Department of the Gaeltacht is saying we're responsible so they are saying to Údarás na Gaeltachta "you have to implement this or we'll cut your funding" and Údarás na Gaeltachta says to the community "you have to implement this or we'll cut your funding". And I'm central to this process myself, on the receiving end, and that's what's happening.

p. 106 (first passage):

we're probably the smallest department [in the civil service]

p. 106 (second passage):

this office could be anywhere now, it isn't to do with the Gaeltacht

p. 106 (third passage):

the Department of the Gaeltacht

p. 106 (fourth passage):

P: They wanted to put an end to us altogether, didn't they? Well, they didn't want the department to have any connection to work on the ground, that that would all be given to the Údarás and we'd only be kind of policy makers. And I suppose that's what happened to a large degree . . . it didn't happen completely, we still have the learners' scheme, but we have no connection to infrastructure anymore.

p. 107:

A: Recommendations were made, y'know, to improve [the Irish speaking scheme] and Guth na Gaeltachta, Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, we made recommendations to improve the scheme. But we all recommended it shouldn't be abolished. But it was abolished, and nothing was put in its place! So what I'm saying is that the opportunity was used to abolish a lot of things. For example, one of the other things that was abolished was the Gaeltacht scholarship scheme, y'know, for second-level students. So you were kind of giving an incentive for people to do their education through Irish. That was abolished. What was put in its place? Nothing!

p. 109:

B: [Conradh na Gaeilge], Glór na nGael, Comhluadar, an tOireachtas and a couple of other groups [were working together to ensure different organisations were not doing the same sort of work]. There'd been a lot of work done on this, we'd put a plan together, to say that we'd come together to share resources . . . Still every group can adhere to its own mission, but certainly more co-operation. But Foras na Gaeilge just

refused to engage with that, really they were annoyed we were doing it, as again, it's the same thing with regards some of these things . . . with the civil service and going back to Aer Árann [see 4.2.9; 5.6.3.1], the Foras had a plan, they wanted to put it through, my way or the highway . . . If you were in charge of a company or business . . . and you had to make a huge change, you wouldn't go about it in the way Foras na Gaeilge did . . . There was no risk assessment of any description done.

p. 110:

K: The opinion I have with most board meetings, if you see in any organisation, it's not the board that makes the policies, it's the civil servants, y'know, they present the policy to the board and the board say "oh yeah, grand". Maybe there'll be a small change or two but usually they just go along with it . . . If the [government] department says you have to do this, you have to do it.

p. 110-1:

D: We did huge work then when that was taking place, we sent letters and got in contact with every TD in the 26 counties. Any of us who were working full time we met with TDs in our constituencies and y'know anyone with kind of political power. We were in Leinster House and I suppose on one hand people were saying that [the informant's organisation] would be ok . . . that they'd be selected. But at the same time no one knew and . . . it did damage to [the organisation's] work at the time because no group like that has huge resources, youth groups in particular. So we were spending a big percentage of our time sorting out things like that instead of focusing on youth work and instead of focusing on the work we were meant to do we had to be politicians . . . We definitely had difficulties as staff dealing with it. And I know that the other groups and lead organisations spent a lot of time, they didn't exactly waste it, but definitely spent a lot of their time dealing with this instead of focusing on things. And it's us, we and five other groups achieved that status. There were 19 groups doing the exact same lobbying . . . There were lots of difficulties and it created tension between groups, it was like the old mantra, kind of "divide and conquer" . . . Groups

like Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge that were in existence since the 1940s, they just disappeared. That question of funding certainly caused difficulties.

p. 111:

nobody has an ounce of respect for Foras na Gaeilge.

p. 113:

adhering to current practice means accepting in practical terms the decline of the minority language in the Gaeltacht (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton, 2015a: 11).

p. 114 (first passage):

M: It's the department that objected to them, isn't it, the recommendations, the Údarás didn't ask for them . . . The department was too worried about being connected to recommendations that were coming from the experts because, I suppose, they're not implementing the 20-Year Strategy properly, they're not making the resources available to for the Gaeltacht Act and the likes so I suppose it goes back to that, to that approach, yeah to marginalise Irish and to do a certain amount but not do much.

p. 114 (second passage):

if you were the minister responsible for Gaeltacht matters would you be wanting to spread that information? I dunno!

p. 114 (third passage):

that's the thing about the civil service and the government generally, they play the long game.

p. 117-8:

P: There's no sense to it . . . our huge lack of staff and the amount we have to do. But you have to accept it. The way we work, for example I'm working on a daily radio programme and I'm presenting and producing myself. There's no one else, no researcher, no producer, there's fuck all, right. If that was in RTÉ there'd be six, seven working on the programme and they'd have a much bigger programme . . . This is a good point for you . . . employees of RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta are second class citizens withing the organisation . . . we're on much lower pay, *much lower* [with emphasis] than everyone who does the same work in RTÉ.

B: And what excuse is there for that?

P: There is no excuse, it's just that we didn't . . . Y'know they're always talking about it, saying we should fight it, but we never did. We should take a case to fuckin...But we're not doing it . . . We should set the law on them, to fuckin Europe, fuckin sue them like. We should. But we're not doing it . . . But maybe people were scared, there was a recession and you didn't want people to think "oh that's that group looking for money". Anyway, it's an interesting point. We're working with less resources and for less pay.

p. 118-9:

D: I see that often, because you're working with Irish it's clear that people think you're doing it "for the cause" . . . people don't see it – and when I say people I mean authorities, governments, powerful people – they don't see Irish and community development as proper work. Like people don't get proper pay for a job, even though they're doing a job . . . Now I understand . . . we're doing these things because we like them and we're particularly interested in them, but y'know the pay and recognition should be the same as for any other group. But that's often the case, anything to do with community development, Irish or English, it's assumed it will happen, instead of giving acknowledgement. Like if you pay someone you get – or you'd assume you get – a better person and that the work will be more successful.

p. 119:

E: I think at this point that RnaG is a waste of time. It's only, I think, they're only talking about death notices . . . It doesn't have programmes like it used to . . . They're just putting in the time now, as you might say, on the programmes.

p. 120:

great deficit that existed until now that we did not have accurate research with regards to the listenership of RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta

p. 122:

S: Certainly one of the biggest things that happened in the area in the last twenty years was the founding of TG4. And that made a huge difference, there's no doubt about that. Now it was established at a time when . . . the economy was starting to grow . . . It kept a lot of people working in the area, people who are very, maybe very creative, artistic, who'd otherwise have left. And there's a certain generation and there's, I suppose, a couple of hundred people, say, who were kept in the area or who were brought in and who are sympathetic to Irish. I mean that's important, aside from the influence of television itself, it's important for the area, y'know, as a lot of these people live in the area, they're raising children by now, a lot of them. That helped the area a lot and it gave a certain status to Irish amongst local business people. I noticed that – business people, they were changing their view of the language. Maybe they used to be kind of negative about the language, they started thinking, well, maybe . . . Irish has status now, the status of television and I think that was important for the image of Irish in the Gaeltacht itself.

p. 125 (first passage):

C: Maybe TG4 has faults, and it does, but there are lots of other companies that have been established because of TG4. Private companies that make films themselves . . .

and with regard to employment that's good. But the thing about it, as you might say, is that they're not permanent jobs . . . And most of them would be through English.

p. 125 (second passage):

C: There was a big fault with TG4 that the people working there were speaking English. Now not everyone was . . . I remember going into an office and it was all English being spoken there. That's something that didn't happen with Raidió na Gaeltachta. Y'see that's because the people were very serious, they fought to make Raidió na Gaeltachta available, they fought for Irish, and for those working in TG4 it was just a job for them. That's the difference, it was a job and they didn't care. They weren't certain themselves. I'm not saying that there aren't certain people in TG4 – there were and there are – who had a particular loyalty to Irish, that's true. But the office workers of Raidió na Gaeltachta were as loyal to Irish as the broadcasters were. That wasn't so in TG4. Who was to blame for that, were the wrong people employed? I don't know.

p. 126:

F: A couple of days ago I applied for work, something I get paid about a thousand euro for. And they said to me, well, this is an internship, like a company that wants to make stuff for TG4. So without me being able to get a proper research [this seems to be a mistake, with the informant confusing the word for research with that for salary – these words are similar in Irish], they wanted to pay me bullshit, €20 extra on top of the dole, right. And it's not like I'm just an amateur, I literally, I went to university, NUI, the fuckin Acadamh in NUI, and I put in loads of work. So for someone who's [qualified] they're saying to me, y'know, "fuck off". And they want to use my work to make a fuckin load of money. So there are just problems there.

p. 127:

The current level of funding is not sufficient for TG4 to engage with a market that is constantly developing and changing. Without a multi-year basis for funding, it is difficult to plan and develop (Oireachtas Éireann, 2017d: 3).



p. 129-30:

the 25% fall in Foras na Gaeilge's budget in the last five years, as well as another substantial cut predicted for next year (Foras na Gaeilge, 2013: 1-2).

p. 130:

S: It was stated clearly . . . that one of the things the Strategy planned to do was to attempt to increase the amount of print media being read in Irish. And what happened? The paper was discontinued, the printed newspaper!

p. 133:

some cultural problem placing a restriction on the system

p. 133-4:

B: I don't want to be complaining about anyone, but if the government isn't willing to govern – 'cause again, civil servant, cushy fuckin number, on your fuckin flexitime, do the same thing, or even worse again, [if you had to] annoy your colleagues cause my minister wants this so sorry, you're gonna have to get off your fuckin arse [and implement a language scheme].

p. 134:

A: Those civil servants have enormous power. And a lot of the time government ministers or whatever politician is in charge of that area isn't willing to engage with or go against the recommendations or opinions of the civil service. The way I see it is that with regard to the civil service there's a kind of a culture at the moment that Irish is a kind of an inconvenience.

p. 135:

B: Is the civil service as opposed to Irish as much of the Irish-speaking community thinks? When dealing with them is that the impression you get?

G: It's not. It seems to me that many feel . . . that they have better things to do than be involved with than this issue. Anyone I speak to, and certainly when I'm sat across the table from them, they tell me they respect Irish, they like Irish. So I can't dispute that, if someone tells me they have respect for Irish. But in terms of what the civil service are going to do for Irish, when it comes to legislatively what are you going to do, kind of, and that's what are you promising in the language scheme – so you respect Irish, what's in the language scheme, then? And when we see the commitments being fulfilled, or the lack of commitments . . . that's when the weakness is to be seen. Now why is that happening? Again, I dunno. Y'know it's really, it's a question of, I suppose, leadership, really.

p. 138 (first passage):

everyone was hanging on for dear life really, with regards to staff.

p. 138 (second passage):

É: It's happening in every sector . . . A new approach that the state had. A new approach that's international in a way . . . Fianna Fáil started this. Fine Gael followed it. They told us that they wouldn't but they followed it, step by step. And often it suits those who are in charge, like the people who are in charge of government departments, they're able to keep better control of things . . . with this thing that "this is what you've got to spend for the year, this is all you have, you've got to do it" . . . I don't think it's only to do with Irish. I thought that until I started talking to people in other government departments, for example national parks, health, FÁS or training – it's the same thing. I think that that's something we always fall into, that we're in this bubble, the Irish bubble, and we think that everything is...

B: Against us.

É: Yeah.

p. 140:

A: Thirteen times it was mentioned that it was dependent on resources. Yeah. But that's happening...

G: Often.

A: Maybe it's not that transparent, that they say dependent on resources...

G: Yeah, yeah.

A: But it could be put in a way that means it's very difficult to assess the commitments made or have them presented in a way that ensures they achieve results.

p. 141:

limited resources

p. 143 (first passage):

S: For me looking at it objectively, that's not part of the recession, it's part of this rollback of civil servants and the state from being responsible for anything themselves and farming it out to some other group. I mean I think that there's a kind of new attitude now in the civil service that we're standing back from doing anything or making any decisions, we'll leave that to regulators. But we're safe, so you can't ask us any difficult questions in the Dáil because "oh some other group is in charge of that".

p. 143 (second passage):

I believe the language is being driven to the margins of society continually, and I include here much of the public administration. I don't believe at all that the blame for this is primarily on the political class, but it appears to me that although there are people in the civil service who strongly support Irish, there are stronger and more widespread forces that do not care whether our national language lives or dies (Oireachtas Éireann, 2014).

p. 143 (third passage):

stronger and more widespread forces

p. 143-4:

that's not to do with the economy, that's the government's attitude

p. 144:

it appears to me that it's just a pain in the ass for them

p. 146:

M: That's neoliberalism again – the state has no function except as an administrator for business people. It has no duty towards society, and the Gaeltacht is a society, and the language is part of the country's society. But . . . there's no box in the spreadsheet for that, so they have nothing to do with it.

p. 146-7:

there's a specific attitude . . . with the government being against Irish

p. 147 (first passage):

too often in this country the blame is placed on people when it is more correct to place in on a system or conditions (Ó Murchú, 2006: 27).

p. 147 (second passage):

M: It shows that Irish and the Gaeltacht were not priorities . . . It's not that there's animosity amongst most politicians against Irish, but when they were looking at the problems they had to solve Irish and the Gaeltacht were not part of that.

p. 147 (third passage):

it's to do with decisions the government took regarding debt, to take ownership of debt, when you're paying back the level of debt that we are, everything is going to be cut.

p. 152:

É: 950 [people] lost their jobs here . . . but the thing that happened with regard to the language, it was very interesting because jobs took primacy. It was very interesting. Two years we had public meetings about employment and there is no way in those two years that anyone was going to mention language.

p. 163 (first passage):

These districts are known to coincide more or less with areas of rural Ireland which present an economic problem of the greatest difficulty and complexity. The language problem and the economic problem are in close relation to each other, and your Commission is asked to consider both together. (Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 1926: in Irish on p. 2, with this English translation given on p. 3).

p. 163 (second passage):

the most wretched and oppressed class of all our people in Ireland

p. 166:

S: If you didn't go to university or doing a course or something like that, most of the young people went working, building houses or whatever there was to do – but everyone like that left.

p. 166 (first passage):

G: Everyone is in Australia, the young men, say the group who are the same age as me, who I was at school with. Lots of them are gone. This is the group who were working as carpenters, working on building sites in Galway and things like that. They're gone. Half of my class, I'd say, are in Australia, or America, or Canada, or somewhere. And they come home at Christmas and they leave again . . . I don't think things had as big an effect on women.

p. 166 (second passage):

It's those lads most of all who'd speak Irish

p. 168 (first passage):

traditional manufacturing companies . . . textile companies, electronics companies

p. 168 (second passage):

É: They moved . . . the companies, two companies moved to Bulgaria, a company moved to China. There were a thousand jobs a week being lost in the state at that time. A thousand manufacturing jobs. It was the end of an era in a way.

B: The end of the era of industry?

É: Traditional manufacturing.

p. 169 (first passage):

A: The thing that we're seeing here in Ireland is . . . with regard to big industries you're talking about industries that are "information based" as they say, and usually those industries or factories or businesses, whether it's Google or Yahoo or Microsoft, they're based in areas where there are big universities – you're talking about Dublin, Galway, Cork, Limerick. And rural areas, even if they have small university centres, they're not going to be able to supply hundreds of graduates and things like that, different types of graduates. So the thing we're seeing, I think, is an end to that era, where there'd be more than fifty jobs in any one company in an area like this, instead we're looking at small industries, again maybe information based, but on a much smaller scale.

p. 169 (second passage):

M: [It's] alright sending things out to eastern Europe and China and those places but over time these places will improve and pay will rise. And it's happened. And then you're looking at something and maybe it's not that much cheaper than getting something made in Ireland or in England but that the supply chain is long and you can't depend on it. And the other thing that's happening is the kind of digitisation of

manufacturing. There's a question of skills and everything like that, and automation and everything . . . and I'd say that's more of a threat [than jobs going overseas].

p. 170 (first passage):

B: What is the most westerly point that is viable for factories?

M: Tulach.

B: Do you think?

M: Absolutely. TG4, Tulach. We spent years [somewhere further west] and it was very difficult for us. It was too far from Galway city, too much travel . . . difficult for customers to find you and everything like that. After, after TG4, I'd say that's the point. That's just to be realistic about it.

p. 170 (second passage):

R: Oh my God Gaoth Dobhair and Conamara are not the same. We're rich here compared to the people of Gaoth Dobhair . . . They're very cut off . . . You'd notice it, there's just not the same employment there. In a way it's because of the border, they're kind of cut off from their natural city, Derry, and they're very far really, they're very far north. I'd say they're hit worse, because at least in Conamara, it doesn't matter where you are in Conamara, it's still possible to go to Galway. But in Donegal where would you go?

p. 170 (third passage):

B: What is the biggest difficulty you have when trying to get companies to locate here?

É: This is completely against everything I say publicly, but Donegal!

B: That's what I thought, remoteness?

É: Remoteness. Jesus. There's no train into the county, we're separated from the six counties by a border . . . You're up there, it's difficult. Broadband is extremely important as well and we don't have a proper service. It's often a miracle we get people to locate here.

p. 170 (fourth passage):

If you want to make money you'll go to places like Dublin, where there's a population. If you want to make a difference to your community, to your area, you'll stay in the countryside.

p. 171 (first passage):

S: You can no longer convince industries to locate in rural areas that are far away from infrastructure, from the city, from the college and so on. So the Údarás isn't managing to attract many factories more than 15 miles, 20 kilometres from Galway city. And you see what's happening in Gaoth Dobhair, that it's abandoned . . . There was a time, say at the time of Gaeltarra, there was a better grant if you were willing to locate in the Gaeltacht. Gaeltarra were able to say "well there's full employment in Spidéal so we're not willing to put you there. We'll put you in Ceathrú Rua or in Carna. You're getting an extra grant because of that". And they were willing to do it. Well they can't do that, you get the same grant in Galway city as you do in Carna . . . And they say – I dunno is it true as Europe is blamed for a lot of things when it suits organisations and politicians – but they say that that's because of the European rules.

p. 171 (second passage):

B: The various policies the government has are strongly supporting the central economy instead of the regional or marginal economy. Whether that's being done intentionally or whether it's just that they know no better, or a bit of both. But it's happening and it's getting worse.

p. 172:

M: We thought there'd be good infrastructure around . . . After 11 years a month ago we got proper broadband.

B: Stop!

M: After 11 years. Now if we thought that it'd be like that 11 years ago, we wouldn't believe it . . . At the time we thought between 2003 and 2007 or 2008 that the Údarás,



that the Údarás had lots of wealth and they were able to improve things. And they were and they helped us and things like that but . . . [during the coalition government of] Fianna Fáil and the Greens especially the cut to the Údarás' budget could be seen and you couldn't get anything off them . . . There was no funding available from the Údarás and it was all dependent on the private sector.

p. 172-3:

B: Nine out of every ten small companies that closed between 2006 and 2011 were outside of Dublin. So the recession had a much bigger impact . . . on areas outside of the main cities. If you look at the amount of people who lost jobs in the recession between 2006-11, around 90% of them didn't have third level education . . . Because most of the small companies are based outside of the big cities, there are few big companies based outside the cities . . . Around 20% of the English economy is based around London, London-based. 40% of Ireland's economy is based around Dublin! . . . And it annoys me when you hear ESRI reports about the 26% increase in GDP, that's bullshit. But maybe an increase of 4-5% in the economy, and that's fine – there's maybe a 6-7% increase in areas like Dublin, Galway, Galway city and so on. But what about Boyle in Roscommon? Y'know what about Oughterard? What about Gaoth Dobhair? What about Acaill? What about Ballina even that's bigger than that? Very, very little.

p. 175 (first passage):

L: When the [industrial estate] was going well and the workers were getting pay from it and that pay was being spent locally on local services and in the hotels, there used to be people and they'd be out on Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday night – and maybe even Monday night too! . . . The place was so lively. And wasn't it good that they had the money to do that. Employment and everything was going well! But things have collapsed in that estate, there's nothing else to say about it.

p. 175 (second passage):

H: You'd think it was getting worse every year, you'd think the worst hadn't yet come [in the area] but I don't know what else is left to close. I mean this year when the Gaoth Dobhair Hotel closed down, well the Gaoth Dobhair Hotel closed last year. And then Seaview closed down. I mean that's another one, the most popular place there was . . . Well there are four or five pubs that closed in [recent] years, that's a big deal like. And then the Gaoth Dobhair Hotel closed . . . Seaview was closed, Tí Joe is closed for years, Dodge is closed. Y'know the place that people used to be able to stay. There's not one hotel left. Oh! The Foreland Heights, y'know – closed as well. And the worst times when there was no money in the country, before the boom, y'know, those two places were doing great, y'know. And it just effects people's mood . . . But jeepers, it's hit badly. If it happened 4-5 years ago, but the fact that it's still happening – Seaview just closed this year like. And y'know yourself when there are more places open there are more people stopping by. Well now there's nowhere to stay except Campbell's, y'know there's no hotel . . . That's awful.

p. 175 (third passage):

B: When the hotels and all that infrastructure closed, did that affect the...

É: Language?

B: Yeah.

É: It did. Because the people who were working in the place, their daughters, their sons, they were getting summer jobs there. I worked in one of those things myself for five years, there was nobody speaking English. That in particular was infrastructure that was extremely traditional and important with regards to the language.

p. 176 (first passage):

C: That hotel was very busy for a while and it's said that lots of matchmaking was done there, and that young people met each other and there's a few other places like it. And [now] they meet each other in Letterkenny and maybe two Irish speakers won't meet . . . There's been a linguistic breakdown.

p. 176 (second passage):

É: I have a daughter who's 17 years old, she needs to go to Letterkenny for discos. We used to go down the road to the disco . . . you were meeting with other people who spoke Irish. You wanted to be in the area, it was good to go out in the area.

p. 176 (third passage):

C: People don't go out anymore, it was the opposite [during the Celtic Tiger]. Everybody was out, especially at the weekend. The pubs would be full, some of them very full. But that's gone. So there isn't the social vibrancy. The young people, y'see there's kind of, I think it's a vicious circle they call it, the young people, maybe I meet a person who's at university in Dublin. And I say "do you get home often?" and they'll say to you that they don't really like going home for the weekend as there's nowhere to go out there. So they'd prefer to be in Dublin or wherever they are at the weekend. So not only were they driven away, this is people who are working too, they were driven away . . . But then the opposite – because it's like that the young people aren't coming back [to their native communities], young people in particular. It never used to be like that, until four or five years [ago].

p. 177:

R: We're in competition with other areas maybe in Scotland or in Europe or wherever. So we'll try to let them know that there's a skilled workforce available, that it's a nice area to do business in, that the staff are loyal to their employer.

p. 178 (first passage):

É: It's not the same as people working in manufacturing in Dublin who are able to go in and out of jobs. People work very well here.

p. 178 (second passage):

B: Are there many coming here from Galway [city] or the Galltacht?

N: A third. That's the figure from the Údarás itself . . . They say they have no role in the recruitment process with regards to these companies. I think that they look at

themselves as the IDA for the Gaeltacht, and that they're in competition with the IDA to create jobs and the yardstick they have for themselves is how many jobs they've created. Language and culture are much lower on their list of priorities.

p. 178 (third passage):

N: Maybe the linguistic implications [of language use in factories] are ignored as well. As often it's in the workplace that men and women start going out, or men and men, or women and women! So that has implications, there isn't an Irish-speaking atmosphere in lots of these factories.

p. 178-9:

M: All the managers there spoke English. There was no effort, unless you knew somebody beforehand, there was one person who knew Irish and I spoke Irish to him, but again, if you were at meetings it was English...It was people from the Gaeltacht working there but there were also other people coming in from elsewhere as well, especially those with high level qualifications for dealing with quality, dealing with engineering and things like that, these weren't people who spoke Irish. But there were people from [other Gaeltacht towns] coming in, maybe they knew Irish but they didn't speak it. And again, you know what it was, if you meet a stranger you speak to them in English.

p. 179:

F: There's a huge problem in the Údarás that if you use a name in Irish for your business you get a grant.

B: Just if the name is in Irish?

F: That's it like. But you're not doing fuck all with one word in the fuckin, I dunno, Irish ecology . . . They're just using it as a fuckin tool for money, y'know. So when I look at things like that I'm just saying to myself "what the fuck?" . . . Like they should use money for Irish properly . . . That's the fuckin problem . . . The Údarás is doing lots of good things, right, lots of good things. But I think there are holes, y'know, stupid fuckin holes . . . Like do you just want to use it as a fuckin, just exploit it basically? Fuck off.

p. 179-80:

M: I remember they put a big sign out on the road and it was in English and there must have been some complaint made, maybe it was the Údarás itself that complained, and they had to go out and change it and put Irish on it. And again, y'know, there was never that attitude that oh we have to do it in Irish at first. There was never that attitude. And . . . things that you were doing voluntarily yourself, if was left to the people who were focused on Irish, or who were interested in Irish [to promote the language in the place] individually, there wasn't any support at all really.

p. 180 (first passage):

P: In one way it was a great thing. It was keeping people at home, there was employment created at home and lots of people were able to stay at home, Irish speakers of course, which was brilliant, really good. It was very important and necessary that the likes of that was done. But . . . for the first time there were a lot of people in the area who didn't speak Irish . . . So there was a very big social change with regards to language . . . That's the disadvantage to do with creating that employment . . . There's a question to be asked whether it was more positive than negative.

p: 180 (second passage):

É: It doesn't make any difference . . . It's all the same . . . every company that comes has conditions attached to it. A man said . . . "we're not desperate". We are but we don't do that. No, it doesn't make any difference.

p. 180 (third passage):

É: God, there are people that think that there are lots of companies here that did damage to the language. I don't believe that and I never did. The basic thing you need is a lot of employment in order to have a community, to have population density, a place where the language is confident and hopeful in itself. That's the most important thing. And if you look at the way Irish survived in Donegal, the language survived, this is the place, you're sitting in the place where the most Irish is spoken outside of an urban centre in Ireland, if you look at the 2011 census. Why? Look out the window!

Because there are so many people here. And if you look at an area like Fánaid where the language is now weak, the emigration there was permanent, they didn't come back . . . because there weren't the jobs. There was nothing to come back for. That's the foundation, the economic foundation – very important for a community to survive.

p. 181 (first passage):

M: This is what happens – you talk to the IDA, they find a company for you, you talk to the company, you make them an offer, they accept the offer, they come, they go, back to square one – you talk to the IDA. They don't believe in the Gaeltacht community, they have no confidence in the Gaeltacht community. If they wanted something, to make a permanent change . . . that's not going to make any difference. In fact, I believe it's doing damage as it's hammering home to people again that if you want a job you need English. "These are the people, they're doing us a big favour coming here from Holland, or Uzbekistan and they're putting a factory here and creating employment. Now don't do anything stupid like trying to speak Irish or join a trade union, you know what will happen, they'll leave!" But we know what's going to happen anyway – they'll leave! This is the view of the Údarás, and it's no view at all!

p. 181 (second passage):

M: That's neoliberalism, it does that to people. If you say anything at all that doesn't adhere to neoliberalism you're out of your mind! You are! . . . It's now so ingrained in people that there's nothing else, there's no other possibility except neoliberalism. That that's the only way to make progress in life. And it's a lie! A lie from start to finish! That you can break everything in life down to boxes, little boxes in a spreadsheet and put a value on every one of them. And at the end of the spreadsheet if there's a positive value it's worth it, if there's a negative value it's not so get rid of it. Life isn't like that. Like life is based on communities, society...

p. 181 (third passage):

there's never a long term. The business doesn't have to make a commitment to the place, the area, the community.

p. 182 (first passage):

we have lots of the call centres, I dunno what the Irish word for “call centre” is but I’d be happier thinking we didn’t have a word for that type of work!

p. 182 (second passage):

I’d prefer if they weren’t left back on that [island].

p. 182 (third passage):

D: Thinking of my own children, I wouldn’t like if they spent all their youth at home. They went to Galway, they saw other groups, they met the community that was there and from other counties . . . Instead of a little group of them out west talking to themselves. Talking to the seagulls!

p. 183:

that an ecosystem must be developed so that local men and women can start their own businesses in their community and that state companies must support those people in their efforts through making suitable supports available, both financial and non-financial, in order that local entrepreneurs be willing to take the chance of founding their own companies (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2014: 18-9).

p. 183-4:

L: We saw the sort of lack of beds in the area and were saying well what could we do and we were looking at one of the old factories . . . and we’re in talks with the Údarás to see if we’d be able to get the building, we want to develop it . . . Irish is so strong in this area and people come learning Irish and maybe we could, that it could be developed satisfactorily [as] a place where people could stay, where there’d be beds or whatever and . . . a place where campers could stop and charge up. And then if there were Irish classes and it’d be the sort of place where people could come getting a taste of Gaeltacht life.

p. 184 (first passage):

M: We've been doing this for seven months, eight months. And a fortnight ago we got the drawings of the factory we want to use. That's eight months. If my name was Johann Klegg and I from fucking Antwerp and saying that I wanted to come and I'd create employment for 25 people and . . . that I saw this factory but look I'd like to have a meeting with you on Tuesday and could you have the drawings at the meeting, the drawings would be sent by email in the morning. Because it's within their parameters – "right, this is it, we've got him, do everything to make sure we have that". If a group from the area want to start something in the area, they're not interested. They'll put every obstacle in your way . . . That factory is lying empty for five years, with no one showing any interest in it and suddenly when we start going to meetings every day, suddenly the Údarás says a company is interested in it . . . Fair play to them but there are three factories [in the area], there's an empty factory [in a nearby area], I dunno how many [in the industrial estate], move in there! . . . Like maybe I'm just feeling hopeless at the moment, but all through the process since we started, we never got the feeling that these are on our side, they support us, they, they believe we can do something. And it's not that we're a gang of fuckin lunatics who are involved in this – there's a priest on the committee, there's a woman who's in charge of a committee for a community centre . . . There are people here who are working for the community and who understand that we can create employment which would be entirely through Irish, which would be good for the community, which would be creating employment with young people and which would focus on the needs of tourism. When the hotels are almost all closed down, we're talking about making accommodation available . . . a place for camper vans, organising courses for parents whose children are in Irish-medium schools. And this would all be happening in the middle of the Gaeltacht . . . and they're putting every obstacle in front of us.

p. 184 (second passage):

local entrepreneurs



p. 185 (first passage):

É: We have more native companies. And that I suppose is the direction we're going. As they say in English we've been in denial for a long time. I suppose when [the big factories closed] catastrophically there . . . lots of people are waiting for them to come back . . . like the coal in Wales . . . It's not coming back. [But] people out in the community are so bitter about it that you don't want to say it. But it's time to say it and time to be honest.

B: Is it a good thing that there are now more Irish companies?

É: They were always there. See there's this myth about Údarás na Gaeltachta that we were only interested in big companies. At that time 84% of our companies were native and there was only one to five people employed in them. We always had that.

p. 185 (second passage):

M: It must be said that there wouldn't be much industrial employment in south Conamara without Údarás na Gaeltachta . . . I have no doubt about that. And I'd say as well that [his factory wouldn't be located where it is] without Údarás na Gaeltachta. Without any doubt.

p. 186 (first passage):

S: Go up, a couple of months work, and then I had to money to come back to university. And pay the rent or whatever else . . . It was very important. There were lots of students working there. And now that's not there at all and I don't know how parents will be able to . . . send their children [to university].

p. 186 (second passage):

C: If you go [around] this area, you see so many places that are closed up. It's just one place after another . . . It looks very forlorn and . . . it doesn't help to breathe life into any place.

p. 187:

D: Drive through [the town in which the interviewee works] and there's a terrible surface on the road . . . There's I dunno what percentage but a good percentage of the buildings closed, with wood on the windows . . . You can see that they were closed, let's say, in the last five or seven years, y'know. It damages the community's confidence and pride. Y'know it's not a big town half of those buildings closed up . . . If I could inspire the community and increase their sense of pride, that's the answer to the question. If you can increase their sense of pride – it's so simple but the solution to that issue isn't simple. But again the, the language isn't, the solution to the problem isn't . . . in its own bubble. People are walking down the road, they go in to do the shopping, they see half of the town closed. That, that does damage. And it encourages, it's a vicious circle, it encourages the old view of Irish as the language of poverty . . . It's different for people in the Republic outside of the Gaeltacht . . . but if a child hears their grandfather saying that there's a link between Irish and poverty and then when the young person sees the state of the town . . . In there in the industrial estate like [there are] the best of facilities, but – empty. Y'know? I dunno what percentage are filled but it's not much. Young people today aren't stupid, they're cleverer than ever, maybe the cleverest generation for their age. They see this stuff and they make the links between the true story of the town and the language that's meant to be here.

p. 189:

R: It'll change the place a lot, y'know. There's a certain attitude connected to tourists and that attitude, it's strong during the summer at the moment. If people are coming all year, y'know, that's certainly having an impact on people's attitudes . . . If there are that many people coming all the time . . . in the end, y'know, you see the purse coming instead of the person.

p. 189-90:

R: I see [the neighbouring island] and it annoys me a lot, y'know. There are big English signs everywhere – “bike hire”, “hotel”, “guided tours” – huge things everywhere and,

and you'd never know that the Irish language existed. And tourists walking around, kind of, disappointed maybe . . . "anomie" to use the French word, y'know? Then they don't know exactly where they are or why and, and [they were] expecting . . . what they saw in the ads. And maybe you can see that, but you have to pay to do so. And that's not the kind of thing you'd like, y'know, you'd like another type of island, an island we'd like and which would be healthy to live on to raise a family on. And I dunno is that the way that we're going.

p. 190 (first passage):

I hope I'm wrong but it seems to me that this island is becoming like a place for tourists.

p. 190 (second passage):

tourists won't save the language, they're leaving!

p. 190 (third passage):

S: I think that the west of Ireland's economy can be developed in the way we're going now, although it's slow. There's no solution other than fishing, food, seafood, tourism, water sports. And when you look down at an Daingean and west of an Daingean [in Kerry] you'll say to yourself this is an amazing example of an area that is thriving and where there's energy and people visiting . . . We have a lot in Donegal. So, is it that some of the solution is the way, the things we're doing now? I hope so. Because you've got to be rooted in the environment and the language and culture and the ocean, as they are the concerns we have.

p. 191 (first passage):

E: It's all tourism now from start to finish . . . The European Union destroyed . . . the fishing. And really, it'd scare you that if anything went wrong with the tourism...

B: You'd be sunk?

E: Badly.

p. 191 (second passage):

the minute the tourism stops, if the people are poor the next day well there was really fuck all there anyway.

p. 192:

D: There's lots of tourism in north Conamara, in the English speaking area . . . what happens is that buses go west . . . from Galway and they go to Kylemore Abbey [outside of the Gaeltacht] and then they drink a cup of coffee and they're back [in the city] in time for dinner, dinner in the evening. That or they go to Ros a' Mhíl and they go out on a tour to Árann. The tourism we have isn't big but it's shared better, that's the Irish summer colleges . . . [But] even on its own, tourism won't save any area, y'know. It's a help alright.

p. 193 (first passage):

C: On the rock [i.e. island] things are half decent. There's a kind of sustainable development there in a way because of the tourist season and the tourism helps a lot in keeping the place as it is.

p. 193 (second passage):

the small number of them that are left we want to do different things, so they get every type of job.

p. 194 (first passage):

Some make . . . their money in the summer and they go to sleep for the winter

p. 194 (second passage):

E: But you won't find anyone, that's the other problem we have . . . Everyone is so busy. Because you can draw social welfare and work in the tourist industry. But I suppose the Department [of Social Protection] close their eyes to it as if they didn't the island would be badly off and it would wind up costing the state more in the end.

p. 194 (third passage):

E: I wouldn't say that there are as many Americans coming in the last few years . . . In a way the year they were saying that the country was in a bad state was the best year we had. With regard to this place selling crafts it was the best year. And since then it's improving but before then we were selling very little. It was like Irish people were saying this is our own country and we're going to go on holiday in Ireland.

p. 195:

S: It's not on the tourist route, they go into Dublin, down to Cork, Kerry, maybe up to Galway, Cliffs of Moher and then they leave again. Not many go up to that part of the country and if they do, they stop in Bundoran. They don't go up to [the Gaeltacht] most of the time. No, like, there are...if not for the tourists in the summer there wouldn't be much life there at all anymore, so it does exist but it's not too strong at the same time. It wouldn't be strong enough to keep people in the area. There's a few months' work in the summer, that's it.

p. 195-6:

L: There are the facilities, there's accommodation, there's whatever . . . there's everything [in Galway]. But with regard to this area there is still significant investment to be made . . . If we're talking about attracting people . . . the infrastructure needs to exist . . . But again, it comes back to a lack of money. There's an application going in to the Department of the Gaeltacht and the department isn't granting the money or whatever. So it's shameful when you think of it . . . There's a group here locally and they have a tourism subcommittee, I'm on that subcommittee too and trying to develop bits and pieces . . . There are groups that are trying to promote this area and sometimes you'd be as well off talking to that wall there. When you go to the authorities and they say yeah that's a lovely vision and everything on paper but a lack of money I think or a lack of whatever it is.

p. 196:

it's very difficult to attract tourists if you don't have the infrastructure, it's a kind of a vicious circle.

p. 197 (first passage):

C: It's a vicious circle, because things were bad the hotels closed and the social life isn't good . . . There's only one pub. So if a large group did come, we'd have nowhere for them to stay.

p. 197 (second passage):

H: If it's open it makes the place seem alive. There was a year there when the last owner, y'know, when they were selling it, when it wasn't open and it was awful for the island . . . when things close it makes the place look bad.

p. 198:

D: If we don't get a [new] boat, it won't, we won't have proper development, tourists won't come . . . And not only the correct boat but we want the same type of ferry that goes to [Oileáin Árann in Galway]. Longer, more comfortable...

p. 199 (first passage):

S: You could say "conas atá tú?" [the form of "how are you" that people who learned Irish at school would be most likely know] to 300 people coming in off that boat and barely five would understand you, less again if you are saying "caidé mar atá tú?" [the form of "how are you" used in the local dialect]

p. 199 (second passage):

you feel like an idiot if you speak Irish and people don't understand you.

p. 200 (first passage):

G: Without the Irish learners [i.e. attendees at the summer colleges] there'd be nothing [in the area]. Funnily enough, that's interesting, I was talking about, I was at a regatta on Sunday and there was a gang of old lads sitting on a ditch looking out at the boats. But [a summer college] was just here and the parents of the attendees were collecting them to go home, I guess the course was finished. And they were saying without them there'd be nothing in the area. And they were right . . . The odd tourist would come but tourism isn't [big].

p. 200 (second passage):

N: It's worth, I'd think, around €20 million a year. 11,500 come to the colleges, outside of the Acadamh and courses [for adults]. We could say that each teenager is worth around 2,500. They pay 900, the Department pays for the accommodation, so there's a nightly rate. I'd say around 2,000 per child [and the parents who come to visit], eating a meal with the child. It's easy to do the sums. 11,500 by 2,000. At least 20 million.

p. 200 (third passage):

R: I used to ask people why isn't tourism really developed here in the Gaeltacht in south Conamara compared to Clifden or places to the north. And a Conamara man who was working with me said "sure why would they do that when they can make 20 or 30,000 in the summer with the Irish learners?" And I said "can they really make that much money?!" And he said "yes".

p. 200 (fourth passage):

S: Not only does it bring money in but it also gives an incentive with regards to Irish. A family that keeps students, y'know, they understand that there is an advantage to Irish being spoken in the area, and due to them speaking Irish themselves.

p. 201:

B: What about the summer colleges, was there any change in numbers or the layout of the colleges?

P: I have to say that there was. I saw a catastrophic decline, really. And in a way that the sector was at risk in different areas. I often talk to people in other colleges and I see that everyone has the same problems. When you charge I suppose between 800 and €1,000 for a three-week course, when the country collapsed that was the first thing people stopped paying for . . . We were hit catastrophically.

p. 205:

B: Why is it English [that's on all the signs] do you know?

P: It's started here even with the people who want to keep Irish. I see them putting up – it started within the last five years – putting up signs that are only in English and that it's more effective, that it's mostly English that the tourists speak, or that it's easier. They think it's not doing any damage and they're deceiving themselves and thinking that the language isn't really in danger and it's only the summer really, wasn't it always like this and wasn't there always some English in the place, and, and what harm, I suppose. But it upsets me.

p. 205-6:

P: It's sad in a way as I remember being there and there used to be Irish on everything and every kind of shop sign it was in Irish, but while I was travelling through the area I just noticed that there are lots of signs in English there. And y'know it was very, it was sad to see in a way, y'know, that it happened suddenly . . . within ten years.

B: Why is that do you think?

J: Well it seems to me, y'know, that people think, it's focused on tourists and on themselves. Maybe there's a lack of confidence or pride and that they think that they need to sell themselves through English. See when the learners stopped going [to the summer colleges] . . . there was a kind of change in people's minds.

B: We need to do something.



J: Yeah, yeah. And the Irish-language people aren't coming to us anymore, there aren't the jobs...And y'know it's kind of abstract but . . . it influences people, definitely it influences people. Y'know there are lots of those groups and shops and I know that the shop owners speak Irish. I'm not saying that every single one of them speaks Irish but I know that a lot of them speak Irish at home. I think it's psych-, in the psyche in a way.

p. 209 (first passage):

S: People would emigrate very easily. It's much easier for people from here to emigrate to America because they have relations over there – cousins, uncles, aunts – they're not going somewhere where they don't know anyone, y'know. And usually if they go maybe they have an uncle who could give them a job, or who knows someone . . . There are lots gone to Australia too, but America is very easy.

p. 209 (second passage):

G: The pattern I saw then was say if one person went to Australia then he'd ring his mates who were at home doing nothing and he'd say come out here, the craic is good, the money is good, come on. So it's groups that went there.

p. 209 (third passage):

They're in Abu Dhabi, to New Zealand, in Germany, France, England, Scotland, the US. And there's no doubt that if there was work on the moon they'd be on the moon too.

p. 209-10:

S: Lots of them are working up in Aberdeen too.

B: What do they do there?

S: Is there oil or gas up there?

B: There is, oil.

S: So yeah there was a huge group [from his town] working up there but I think the work there stopped too so they moved to England. And yeah just people who were working in England for a year to get the money to go to Australia . . . Because they can't get the money at home to go to Australia. And the people who are left at home, they can't go anywhere if their family doesn't have money, or maybe an uncle or aunt to say alright sure we'll help you, you can't get a job to save the amount you'd need to go there.

p. 210 (first passage):

A: There's a very high rate of emigration and the further west you go the higher it gets . . . If you go back [to the west of the Gaeltacht] the place is totally abandoned. There are hardly any young people left . . . Anyone single, young, they've left the place . . . The areas nearer to Galway aren't quite as bad, y'know, as there's still some work in the city for people. But still there's a lot of people gone.

p. 210 (second passage):

Still it's the case that the strongest Irish-speaking places are the poorest.

p. 210 (third passage):

L: When people emigrate, you are sucking the soul out of the community . . . A community that was once strong . . . when the work and employment and everything was going well . . . Everyone who leaves takes a part of the community with them . . . everyone who leaves is a fatal blow for the community, I think. And the thing is, it's adding to the abandonment of the countryside. I mean when you see just the places closed . . . the number of houses, not just houses but places where there was employment in the past. If you drive around and see the places left cold, idle, abandoned – places that once had life and light and smoke, you say to yourself isn't it an awful pity, but an awful disgrace too.

p. 211:

that's about 50% economic. People want to move around anyway.

p. 212 (first passage):

M: I think life is good there. We have everything we want. Like I love that in winter there are no takeaways or things like that, you have to be healthy, you have to make your own thing. I think that's so good . . . We have services, there's a shop, we have a doctor, we have schools, we have the football pitch, we have a handball alley . . . I can't think of anything else we'd want.

p. 212 (second passage):

with regards to the language, that'll kill the language, if young people, native speakers, aren't staying at home, that's the end.

p. 212 (third passage):

A: We're also seeing a lot of widows, austerity widows you could call them. Women that are left here with their children while the men are gone away to work in other places. I had a cousin like that, she was left here . . . and her husband went to New Zealand for a year because he had no other work to keep him going. And he was sending the money home, it's like the old days, when the old lads would be . . . working in England. So, there's lots of that happening. There are some people commuting, going back and forth to England and to Europe even, and they'll stay a couple of weeks over there and then come back.

p. 213 (first passage):

L: That's no way for any family to be . . . or for a father to be, gone abroad or what have you. And talking to people on the phone or whatever. There are families that are hit hard by a lack of work and you'd be saying to yourself that's not good for any community. And it, it's makes you angry in a way, but it breaks your heart too.

p. 213 (second passage):

A: I noticed the number of houses closed up, unbelievable. Brand new houses. Yeah, lots and lots and lots [in west Conamara]. You'd be going around and you'd see a house that was brand new and closed and the gate locked and when you'd ask who was there, it was young people who built the house maybe and had mortgage repayments to make and who knew that the only way they had to pay the mortgage was by going and working somewhere and paying for a house that is empty.

p. 214:

L: They leave the secondary school here and go to college or university and then they leave the area. They get their education and then to get a job, well, maybe they'll do a BA but you need a masters or a doctorate in this day in age just to get in anywhere.

p. 215 (first passage):

I wouldn't be satisfied with the employment that's there, there'd be nothing there, well I don't know about forever, but at the moment there's no job there that I'd be interested in.

p. 215 (second passage):

you're not going to do a course, to learn how to be a chef and come out here to go cooking for terrible pay.

p. 216:

G: That's the kind of person who comes out here [they want] quiet, introversion, sort of, or Lithuanians to go working in the hotel.

B: Are there many Lithuanians in the hotel?

G: Every year more people come out.

B: Really, and why don't they get islanders?

G: Because they can pay them badly and shout at them.

p. 217 (first passage):

P: There's a house back there . . . and your man, the auctioneer, was thinking they'd get 145,000-150,000 for the house. And the owner said ask for 170,000, I want 170,000. It was sold for 270,000. And local people didn't have the money to buy it. It was two people from Galway [city] who bought it, although they had two houses and they sold both of them. So the thing that's happening is that local people can't get planning permission so they can't build a house on their own land and then when they go to buy a house the price is too high because you can't get planning for a site. And then demand is so high, because house prices in the city increased so much, if you have a house in Galway, and especially if you bought it at the right time...

B: You'll make a fortune.

P: You'll make...exactly! And that means that local people, many of whom are out of work already, well they have no chance.

B: And so they're leaving?

P: Well they have no choice. They don't want to leave. I'm very comfortable with people who want to leave for a few years and I think it's a good thing . . . But if they want to come back [they should] have that chance too. And if they want to stay in the first place and not go abroad, they should equally be able to do that.

p. 217 (second passage):

S: The language, maybe the language is dying. Because blow ins came, a couple of people, my wife married in from Scotland . . . a couple of people came like I say, a woman from Russia, a couple, a woman from France, there's a few people who

married into the island . . . And it's, it's – how would you say – it's putting the language under pressure.

p. 218 (first passage):

S: Now that more people I suppose from the mainland have moved to the island there are more children with English as their first language . . . And instead of making those children speak Irish the [local] children switch to English, I suppose to make things easier for them.

p. 218 (second passage):

E: At this stage somebody from everyone's family is going to marry someone who won't feel strongly about Irish and then the first thing that will be said to you is well "what about the person in your own house?" Y'know. There's not much you can do about it. But then there's the personal thing too, because if someone's son or daughter marries someone without Irish, it's very hard for the person at home who has to say you have to speak Irish . . . You need to give them time – that's ten years – at least ten years – if you have to give everyone ten years, y'know, to learn it...But I dunno. I suppose if there was a plan. Lots of the people who move to the place – this is maybe now people who aren't directly connected to the people of the island – but lots of them they move here and at first you'd think that they are very serious about it and it looks like they are and they'll be going to classes. But within two or three years, even two years, that'll be abandoned – "we're in now and they've accepted us and it doesn't matter". And you don't know is it ourselves that are at fault, at first you'll be saying "are you learning Irish?" and then after a while you forget, it's as if you have so much practice speaking to them in English that you don't think of it.

p. 219 (first passage):

É: If they go for a long time and if they marry someone and they are back around here there isn't the infrastructure to help them with regards to the language – there wasn't in the 70s either, but the difference now is there are far fewer monolinguals [and]

strong communities compared to the 70s. So it's like the old thing . . . who's immersing whom?

p. 219 (second passage):

If they come back there'll be serious implications for the language. It's a huge question.

p. 219 (third passage):

huge question

p. 222-3:

L: Guth na Gaeltachta had a fantastic vision. They were extremely important. The thing is that there was a united voice . . . The people who started it were pioneering, they saw the need for a group that would raise a voice for the rights of Gaeltacht people and to keep services in this area. They did great work, really good work . . . It was a great campaign, a cross-community, cross-party campaign, it had nothing to do with political parties. It came from the grassroots and it was focused on Gaeltacht schools and everything and community centres and women who kept students at summer colleges. Even the meetings I attended . . . there was a big crowd and even an atmosphere, it was good for the spirit, for the soul, for the person themselves to be sat in the room. And sometimes there was a heated, tense debate taking place and people were giving out, but that aside it was good just that there was community and people with this common vision. And people were saying, well, here we are together, y'know strength in unity, united we stand, divided we fall as the proverbs say . . . We were protesting against Bord Snip . . . which was saying close this, that and everything!

p. 223:

M: I really believed in Guth na Gaeltachta. But at a couple of meetings I raised the question, they were against cuts in the Gaeltacht, right, in the Gaeltacht sector. But . . . I raised the point that Guth na Gaeltachta should stay as Guth na Gaeltachta but be part of the wider thing against austerity and cuts . . . There was a big march in Sligo, and they had a nice banner . . . And at a meeting I said that there should be a

representative from Guth na Gaeltachta at the march. And they said “oh no, no, that isn’t to do with the Gaeltacht, it’s not to do with Irish”. And I said no but it has to do with...Y’know Irish speakers are very good saying people have to stand with us, and I agree with them, people should stand with the language, but when the Irish-language community isn’t willing to stand with other people, then I can see how they’d feel too: “what did the Irish speakers ever do for us?” So what I was saying was just let’s bring the banner and we’ll march and look I’m going to Sligo anyway, can I get someone else and we’ll carry the banner together? No.

p. 224 (first passage):

S: It seems that what happened is that because the leadership were working for Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeltachta they were more or less told to be quiet, that they were depending on the Department for the Gaeltacht and on Údarás na Gaeltachta for money so your jobs are at risk here so you’re not allowed to criticise [state policy].

p. 224 (second passage):

M: When they sent the letter to [the first spokesperson] threatening to have him fired, that showed how marginal Irish and the Gaeltacht are in the political life of the country. If the likes happened in Roscommon or Ballydehob, anywhere, that a spokesperson for a community group that was protesting government cuts . . . because he worked as a gardener for the OPW they threatened to have him fired, if that happened elsewhere in the country, the trade unions, the left, the newspapers would be full of articles. Even David Norris would make a statement! But it happened! He resigned! And the person who was appointed as a successor after that, even though he did it anonymously, he was threatened with being fired . . . And an end was put to Guth na Gaeltachta.

p. 226 (first passage):

C: I find it strange that the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement ever happened to tell you the truth, when I look at the way things are in Conamara now. I feel like the fight has



gone from them altogether. Whatever sort, whatever struck young people at that time, I know there wasn't many of them [but] lots of [the community] just accept the way things are nowadays.

p. 226 (second passage):

B: I think the fight has gone out of the community, there's no fight left in them . . . I think just that, y'know, the community is kind of tired of fighting all the time. I suppose when they're forgotten – that's kind of dramatic – but when an area is forgotten why would they want to be fighting about water charges or the Dearg le Fearg day?

p. 226-7:

A: The message we're getting is do this stuff [with language planning] but don't expect anything or any leadership from us. In fact, maybe you'll get threatened. That's a very strong message as it shows people that the state isn't going to stand with you. It's hard enough to be a leader with regard to language, I think. We all understand that. 'Cause even in the Gaeltacht Irish isn't our main concern. So people who are looking out for the language, people look at us, instead of seeing us as people who are perceptive and who are doing the right thing . . . people look at us as cranks! And that doesn't help to change that attitude. What incentive are you giving to community groups, or to individuals to stand up for the language?

p. 228:

M: The relationship between the Gaeltacht and the rest of Ireland is strange as the organisations we choose to look after the Gaeltacht don't care about the rest of the country. And the rest of the country doesn't care about the Gaeltacht. So there's a kind of symbiotic relationship there, they ignore each other!

p. 229 (first passage):

U: I don't want to be a negative Nancy about everything but when we were organising them, especially the first march, the big Irish day, mother of God! I think people wanted

us to go around, take them out of bed, prepare breakfast for them, and carry them on your back for the whole march. 'Cause we were organising free buses. We didn't care how many buses were necessary. At least, y'know, we said we'd get the money . . . we'd organise fundraisers, but just get the people.

p. 229 (second passage):

U: We were getting in contact with as many people as possible and they just didn't understand why we were doing it. They didn't understand, they didn't think it had anything to do with their own lives. Because they were saying "what sort of human rights? We're speaking Irish! They're not taking the language from us!" and things like that. They don't see, if it doesn't affect them from the moment they get up in the morning until they go asleep at night, they don't see it . . . One of the women who hosts learners at summer colleges was complaining about the way that money isn't being spent in the Gaeltacht . . . And like as [the interviewee's mother] said, "well you didn't come on the march when you should have". And it's the right answer. But the answer she gave back was "sure I didn't know why ye were doing it".

p. 230 (first passage):

M: I dunno how many buses went to Dublin, and to Belfast a while afterwards. What happened? Fuck all. We got a couple of cops who speak Irish, a couple of Garda who speak Irish. But nothing big happened.

p. 230 (second passage):

B: It's hard to say, I mean when you see what's happening with Aer Árann [see 5.6.3.1] you have to wonder. I think there was some heed paid to us, even the decision to leave the Language Commissioner's office independent, that was very important. Even with regards to the appointment of the new commissioner . . . they could have appointed someone much weaker, I was surprised that there was such an appointment. So it's hard to say how much they listened.

p. 230 (third passage):

A: With regards to the standing of this office, I think it helped a lot with the strength of this office, that there's an understanding that this office has a voice, that Irish speakers

are listening to what this office says, and that this office understands what is necessary . . . I think there is an understanding of that in certain places now.

p. 232 (first passage):

B: That's my opinion after talking to the islanders yesterday, to some insiders, to Ó Cuív and all the politicians. And to give the politicians their due, every party and the TDs, they are all totally behind the islanders. But that's the thing, they understand. That was their strong opinion, they just see the signs . . . That's my opinion of the air service and that's it about saving money, 'cause I remember . . . we had a lobbying day around the same time in Buswells [a hotel near to the Dáil], and I was talking to Michael Ring [the then Sport and Tourism minister] and he was saying honestly to me "I said to Dinny [McGinley, then minister for the Gaeltacht] just do it, take one big hit and that's it, it'll be forgotten about then". So that's their only concern – one big hit, it'll be off your plate. It didn't matter about the fuckin damage that was being done, it didn't matter about the islands. Just look: that'll save you money. You'll take one bit hit, it'll be forgotten about and you won't have to be worried about other people then, you'll have enough to cover it. You'll take one big hit, it'll be forgotten about.

p. 232 (second passage):

T: The reason that they don't want an air service is that they think a boat is good enough for the Oileáin Árann. And it's boat services that go to most of the islands on the Irish coast and why would there be an air service . . . They think it's a waste of time. The people of Árann, they've gotten too much, they complain about everything and to hell with them and that's it.

p. 234:

H: I see the County Council, Jesus, you'd be pulling out your hair dealing with them! "We can't do this, we have no money, we have no money, we have no money..."

p. 238 (first passage):

before language planning you need to have a roof over your head and you need to have a job!

p. 238 (second passage):

a question of money

p. 238-9:

N: Language planning is starting out in a place where the community is already cynical about it, as efforts have been made before. As well as that they don't understand what it involves. There was no planning permission for houses until the '60s I think, people were thinking "what the hell is this, I'm allowed to build whatever I want in my own garden". Now people understand the need for physical planning. It will take time for people and I think a big campaign is needed...It's not a mystery, but it's a new concept for the ordinary community.

p. 239 (first passage):

G: I was at home talking to my parents and they were saying y'know "what is this, I don't want to go down to the hall talking about Irish". I don't know if the community know what the goal of it is. Everything to do with it tends to be kind of academic and no one...It's very difficult to express your opinion when filling out a questionnaire. You're putting ticks in boxes. People hate them, I hate them myself. And if you're not working with Irish, I don't think people realise the mess we're in.

p. 239 (second passage):

R: I must admit, and maybe I shouldn't say this but I don't have much respect for language planning. Now that said I haven't read much about it so I suppose I'm ignorant in that regard.

p. 239 (third passage):

language planning

p. 239 (fourth passage):

B: Y'know this thing they talk about, language planning –

S: Rubbish! Maybe I shouldn't say that...

p. 239 (fifth passage):

P: Y'know Ben, I know nothing about [this process]. Those things kind of make me depressed so I just avoid it. I'd prefer to do my own thing . . . What, the community has to put a plan together? I suppose that's a good thing. But the community isn't doing it, 99% of the community has no interest.

p. 240:

É: And this term . . . “language planning” – imagine you, Ben, you're a young lad down the town drinking pints and you've got a nice girl and if someone said to you “would you like to go to a meeting about language planning? Would you like to go to a meeting about planning for houses?” You'd say “fuckin hell I would not!”

p. 241 (first passage):

É: The biggest difficulty in the Gaeltacht, believe it or not . . . is that the people doing all the work in the communities, development work, that this is thrown in on top of them and it's very heavy and they're very small . . . They feel all this pressure about language planning, this complex thing and at the same time they have to do community development, organise festivals...

p. 241 (second passage):

it's the same group who come to everything and that's not representation of the community.

p. 241 (third passage):

D: It's very difficult for them as all the responsibility for this work is on their shoulders, like at the end of the day if we don't manage to put this plan together . . . they lose their Gaeltacht status, and that's a huge burden to be on any committee. These people

have other responsibilities and, well, as I say, nobody knows what's going on, but they have no expertise, but they're struggling and doing their best, and it's very difficult for them.

p. 241-2:

A: Anybody with the same qualifications as I had . . . if they had gotten an even half decent job, they weren't going to give it up to go working on a language plan. You're talking about a short-term contract, without any certainty. You're not talking about very good money . . . And it's very lonely work, that's the thing that affected me the most . . . It's difficult work . . . It left its mark on my health even, the stress connected with it . . . In my contract it said that it wasn't full-time work, but it was full-time and more. I was working five days a week [and] nearing the end, seven days a week. I'd be getting up at seven, going to work, finishing at midnight . . . Because the money wasn't that great . . . I was translating, I was teaching, doing other little jobs [as well] . . . It's not sustainable for a person I don't think.

p. 242:

B: Is the funding sufficient to do the work?

N: I'd say it is, but the one fear I have is that there won't be the funding to implement the plan. Then there'll be cynicism connected to it again and we'll be further back than ever if that happens. Another effort that failed. That's a very big danger, that's the biggest danger connected with the whole process.

p. 243 (first passage):

I'm not willing to promise anything, Ben.

p. 243 (second passage):

B: It's cultivating ridiculous cynicism. And I think that that's the biggest damage it's doing, as you're discouraging...And I know it's hard to get people out, it always was, but it's harder now . . . you can sit at home and whatever, you have 50 satellite

[channels], whatever you want. So it's hard to get people who are willing to act. Those people are extremely valuable and you need to encourage them. What's happening is that you're discouraging people, misusing those people. And I must say, the fear I have with regards to these communities is that people will just say "fuck it! I've had enough, it's not worth it".

p. 243 (third passage):

D: I know no government can be 100% sure of anything, but, y'know, they can be certain about other things to do with budgets. Y'know, if they're talking to the IDA they can say, well, this corporate tax rate will be in place for however many years, there'll be this rate of interest until whenever...I think it's, funny isn't the right word, but interesting that they can be certain with regard to lots of other things . . . The support that is needed . . . is the certainty, laid out clearly what will happen. Will there be a pot of money? Will money be kind of ringfenced for this project?

p. 244:

A: If there was ever any faith in the process, that faith has been lost . . . There are plans being presented to the minister for the Gaeltacht and he's accepting them, he's signing off on them, but he's not granting the resources that are needed to implement these plans . . . That doesn't make any sense to me, accepting a plan when there won't be resources for it. It'd be much better to go back and re-draft it and form the plan in such a way as it would be implementable on that money . . . These officers who will be implementing the plans . . . there's no way they'll be able to achieve what's in the plan . . . It seems to me that there's a logical flaw there.

p. 245:

A: Those negotiations should be handled at the government level, because if a committee or language officer . . . is applying for grants, for schemes and this, that and the other – I dunno if you've ever seen one of those forms but they are long, they're heavy going . . . If they have to do that to stay afloat, y'know, they won't have the time to do their work properly, they won't have the time to be out in the community.

p. 246 (first passage):

G: Language planning will succeed if the state is involved. If the state isn't involved the communities can't do it themselves. So we can't say until we see them "in action" as they say. But like if the state won't stand with them, and by that, I mean if the state won't make promises with regards to services in the Gaeltacht, for instance, that they'll be available through Irish, it's really lopsided against the community and that's not right. So I don't see, if the state isn't going to put both hands to the wheel and drive this themselves, it's hard to see how the community can do it on their own.

p. 246 (second passage):

P: Get rid of the responsibility. And then if the whole thing collapses . . . they'll be able to say, well, it's not our fault, we gave that duty to the community and if they let it slide . . . it's the communities that are to blame.

p. 247:

R: They're involved in pre-schools, tourism, language, everything. Now they have to implement a language plan so they are extremely, extremely central to community and economic development.

p. 248 (first passage):

M: If a third of co-ops succeeded, they'd get value for their money. 'Cause a co-op isn't moving anywhere. They're not going to say right whatever terms we got five years ago, that's finished, whatever help you gave to this company . . . that's us, we're off. As they're based here, they live here, they're part of the community!

p. 248 (second passage):

R: There's a co-op and it's good and maybe one of the best in the country . . . At the same time when you go to the AGM there'll only be ten or fifteen people, so it's not . . . like you would want it to be, that is everyone involved and keeping an eye on what's happening. And it seems to me that, y'know, it's almost, you could say it's a



state organisation and it's financed by state money and, and that's the attitude people have.

p. 248 (third passage):

C: Maybe over the last couple of years it happened, y'know not spread out totally through the years, it happened kind of quickly, I'll put it like that. So the first thing we lost was the assistant manager . . . We lost that person first and the next thing they cut the operation grant too, y'know? So they cut it everywhere, no doubt, not just us . . . They cut it and the Údarás had no option but to cut it. They cut everyone because when the money isn't there you can't give it out.

p. 249 (first passage):

We get an operation grant from Údarás na Gaeltachta, so that's 85,000 a year. Now we used to be up at 125,000. That was in the good days!

p. 249 (second passage):

C: It really put a lot of pressure on me, like I mean I didn't used to take holidays or anything, I haven't taken a holiday in years . . . That's the kind of person I am I couldn't care less . . . but at the same time that's not for everyone, that's a bad state of affairs, the person who comes after me won't want that life and they'll be right . . . I gave myself a pay cut. Even one year, I'll put it like that, I was willing to do five days' work for four days' pay, do a free day for the co-op . . . I said we have to do something . . . as the co-op is very important for the community.

p. 249 (third passage):

H: So that comes from my job as well. Oh wow, but you couldn't take the hit for everything . . . Thanks be to God they didn't cut it for two years, it's staying at 85,000. So I hope to God that it won't go down because it was difficult, it certainly was. You have to look then for things to cut and I don't want to do that . . . But since we started we haven't pulled anything and I'm proud of that. Now maybe some things should be stopped as they're losing money, but they're important services for the area. So I mean if they turned around tomorrow and said the accountant says you can't spend anything

unless you're making the money back, I'd say alright are we going to shut down the day centre [for old people]?

p. 250:

C: I was like a firefighter . . . Every meeting I was going to I was trying to put out this fire instead of doing community development . . . So a lot of last year was spent going to meetings, fighting, fighting, fighting, as you do, saying to people, y'know this is going to do awful damage to [the community] if you continue on with this . . . If it did anything to stop young people being able to stay [in the area]...

p. 251-2:

G: When I was young I used to go to Pléaráca, Pléaráca used to come to the school, we used to have art competitions, poetry competitions. Louis de Paor . . . he did writing workshops with us. And thinking back, we didn't understand it at the time, but y'know, things like that – Ríonach Ní Néill came, she did a drama workshop with us. Diarmuid de Faoite came, he did things with us. So many came, we had so many chances when I was in secondary school . . . And the thing I liked about that, Pléaráca, for example, both young and old were involved. I remember they had a concert in an Cheathrú Rua. I was pretty young, a huge thing. People came from everywhere . . . It brought the whole community together . . . Like the Gaeltacht Glastonbury I suppose!

p. 252-3:

C: Oh, there's a huge gap left, there is. The worst gap is . . . in the schools. Because they used to fund a group who would be doing drama, writing and poetry . . . Especially in transition year they had courses and it was very good for those who were interested in writing as they'd be writing drama or poetry or prose. They used to do great work altogether and it's all gone. The festival is gone, other things are gone too.

p. 253 (first passage):

A: What's happened there is that the community infrastructure has been dismantled . . . and you need to remember that other things were dependent on a lot of that infrastructure. So, say the organisations like MFG [Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta], Cumas, Pléaráca – not only were they fulfilling the duties of the specific scheme they were being funded by, but they were applying for other schemes and doing other work as well in the community. So, y'know, they were, people were employed, they were doing projects that were employing people and money was going around in the community, it was keeping shops open.

p. 253 (second passage):

S: That government destroyed the voluntary sector . . . It's to do with ideology really, it's not to do with money. It's to do with ideology as really these groups were too critical of public policy with regards to poverty. The government didn't like that. The minister who was in charge of a lot of those things at the time, Éamon Ó Cuív, he didn't like that. And they destroyed that sector really . . . Pléaráca was one of those organisations that was community-based . . . But it was taken out from being under the Department of Social Protection, that's where it started out. And y'know, part of its brief was to deal with poverty and social exclusion . . . And because of Éamon Ó Cuív it was put in with the Department for the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta and they had no interest whatsoever in that agenda, y'know. And in the end they weren't willing to fund it and in the end they said "well if you're not willing to fund it why would we bother with it?" And it fell apart. And that was doing a lot of good for Irish . . . I don't think it fell apart because of money.

p. 254:

S: The thing that has happened with a lot of these organisations is that they've been taken back from the community. They used to be . . . much more community-based than they are now. They're put under the charge of the County Council, and the County Council has a system of committees that looks democratic but is so bloody complicated, even me, say, and I'm interested in these things, I still don't understand

how it works! . . . The council has so many different committees now and those committees are like a buffer zone between the County Council and the community.

p. 256:

B: What about those who were at school with you, do ye speak Irish to each other or would it be more English?

S: Oh, always Irish, yeah always Irish . . . It's very natural for us to speak Irish as that's the way we grew up.

p. 256-7:

B: What about those who you grew up with, do you speak Irish to them?

M: I speak Irish to the lads.

p. 257 (first passage):

M: When this girl is around we don't speak Irish because she wouldn't speak it to us. And it's so strange because she can speak Irish. The odd day we'd speak a few words of Irish to her . . . but she wouldn't speak it to us unless we pressured her . . . She never liked it, "I don't want to learn it, I want to speak English, it's not gonna do anything for me, everyone speaks English, not many people speak Irish", that kind of thing.

p. 257 (second passage):

B: When you're spending time with your friends playing pool down in the hotel, do ye speak Irish?

G: Ah always English.

p. 258 (first passage):

G: The older people would speak Irish amongst themselves and if they knew it was us and knew that we know Irish, then you'll spend maybe two minutes speaking Irish to

them and a few seconds of small talk and you leave, that's it, that's the only Irish you'll speak and then back to English.

p. 258 (second passage):

G: Television is in English, the internet is in English, if you go on Facebook all the posts are in English . . . So I was on the X-box and speaking English with everyone on that. So I lost Irish sooner than [his sisters]. I lost it when I was about 13 – I mostly stopped speaking it. Technology came into my life...

p. 258 (third passage):

P: Where did you learn English? I didn't know you could speak English like that!" "Ah daddy, I have my own little English school down in my bedroom watching Netflix".

p. 259 (first passage):

D: I see [the informant's grandchildren], they know English from when they're two years old. Even though [his daughter] only speaks Irish to them at home, and their father as well. And still...Because every minute they get they're looking at some video or they're on the computer.

p. 259 (second passage):

G: A lot of them speak sort of broken Irish.

B: Really? Your age group?

G: Yeah, I mean look at my standard.

B: You're not bad!

G: I can't put a sentence together without it having an English word in it [informant laughs – probably as he said the word for "sentence" in English]

B: Would you be at the same level as the rest of that group?

G: Oh, lots of them would be much worse!

B: Really?

G: Yeah much worse.

p. 260 (first passage):

M: But see I do it sometimes myself . . . But I like Irish, I want, when I have children, I want to raise them with Irish. But I feel that sometimes I switch to English. Even sometimes I throw in English words like I don't use my brain to find the word in Irish as I have it in English. It's strange.

p. 260 (second passage):

G: You'd only get it from people who were between 18-24 and wanted to look, who wanted to be more like [older people] so they were always emphasising Irish because they'd always speak Irish together, and they wanted to be more like [the older people].

p. 260 (third passage):

B: And is there anyone who's, say, 18 now who'd be like that?

G: No, not any more.

B: Is that gone?

G: Well I'm the generation who's now 18, we're not like that at all, there's sort of...

B: Anyone?

G: Nah, no one.

p. 261:

there's no television in Irish

p. 261-2:

B: Do you think that the children on the island speak Irish together?

M: They do at school. But I listen to them out in the playground and oh! . . . Y'know when an English-speaking family moves in, all the children everywhere change to English instead of them talking Irish. And even though children are more or less sponges and can learn five languages, y'know, when they move in...And the school

is very good, it's all in Irish and I must say they have a very good standard in the school. But we just see them talking English coming out the school gate!

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